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THE PRINCETON BATTLE  
MONUMENT







Photograph by Turner



# THE PRINCETON BATTLE MONUMENT

THE HISTORY OF THE MONUMENT, A  
RECORD OF THE CEREMONIES ATTEND-  
ING ITS UNVEILING, AND AN ACCOUNT  
OF THE BATTLE OF PRINCETON

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THE HISTORY OF  
THE PRINCETON BATTLE MONUMENT



## THE HISTORY OF THE PRINCETON BATTLE MONUMENT

In the autumn of 1783 it was from Princeton that Washington issued the proclamation disbanding the army, and the Congress, seated for the time in Nassau Hall, unanimously resolved that an equestrian statue of Washington should be erected at the place which should be selected as the seat of Government, and directed that it should commemorate "in basso relievo" the following principal events of the war in which General Washington commanded in person, namely: the evacuation of Boston, the capture of the Hessians at Trenton, the battle of Princeton, the action at Monmouth, and the surrender at Yorktown. I am not aware that any of the many equestrian statues of Washington are the direct result of this resolution, but the events mentioned are commemorated by more or less appropriate monuments at Boston, Trenton, Monmouth, and Yorktown, and now at last Princeton is about to be rewarded for her patient waiting by a monument which in beauty and interest at least will rank with any of the rest.

Exactly one hundred and ten years after the battle of Princeton a meeting was called at the Nassau Hotel with a view to procuring a suitable monument. The meeting was called to order by Mr. John F. Hageman

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as Chairman and Mr. Charles S. Robinson as Secretary. After discussion, a long preamble and the following Resolutions were passed:

- I. Resolved, That we will proceed to provide and erect a suitable "Monument" in honor of the "Battle of Princeton" and in memory of General Hugh Mercer, and that we will ask our fellow citizens and the Legislature of New Jersey for such assistance as will entitle us to demand and receive, under the act of Congress "concerning battle field monuments," the further sum of \$20,000.
- II. Resolved, That the chairman of this meeting appoint a committee of five who shall nominate a committee of twenty-one, to be known as the Battle Monument Committee of Princeton, who shall have power to appoint a Chairman, Treasurer, and Secretary; that said committee may increase its number from time to time as it may deem advisable; and may subdivide itself into as many committees as it may deem necessary and proper to carry out the object of erecting said monument, and may adopt needful rules and by laws, to further said object.

It will be seen that the sum fixed upon at the time was \$40,000, of which Congress was expected to furnish one half, the citizens of Princeton and the Legislature of New Jersey the other half. As the project developed, however, the United States Government will have furnished \$30,000 and the State of New Jersey



\$30,000. This sum was set aside for the monument itself. For the site, including the little park and the grounds in front of the Princeton Inn, the citizens of Princeton and their friends have all in all contributed about \$135,000. It is fair to state that although many citizens subscribed most generously toward the various purchases of land in the heart of Princeton, the moving spirit and chief financial support came from that devoted citizen, Mr. M. Taylor Pyne.

The second resolution called for a committee of five to appoint a committee of twenty-one to be known as the Battle Monument Committee of Princeton. The committee of five performed their task, appointed the committee of twenty-one, and by Feb. 4, 1887, under the title The Princeton Monument Association was incorporated, and proceeded to elect a board of Trustees with Prof. Henry C. Cameron, President, Mr. Bayard Stockton, Recording Secretary, and Mr. Crowell Marsh, Treasurer. They recommended that the Association fix the sum of \$2. as annual dues, \$20. for Life Membership, and gifts of \$100 and upwards for a class called Patrons. Some wished the annual dues to be set at \$5, but in order to have the membership as general as possible the sum was later reduced to \$1.

The question of site naturally occupied at an early date the attention of the Association, which on Feb. 22, 1887 resolved "that the land in the triangle at the juncture of Mercer and Stockton Streets, at the head of Nassau Street is the most eligible site for our proposed monument, whatever may be the form thereof, and our first efforts should be to obtain that site if

possible." This site remained for some years as the choice of the Association. It is true that on Memorial Day of 1887 the Hon. John F. Hageman hinted that a battle field monument was the most desirable form for the Princeton battle monument. He was however immediately followed by Dr. John T. Duffield who emphasized the action of the Association, remarking "It is proposed to erect the monument on the spot where the battle of Princeton terminated, in the neighborhood of the corner store, the highest point of land in the Borough, probably the highest point of land on the old post road between Philadelphia and New York." By June 1, the town was partitioned into fifteen districts and collectors appointed for each district. This work proceeded slowly, as it was desired first to ascertain whether our efforts were to be encouraged by an appropriation from Congress. Subscriptions in the form of promises were received, but the Treasurer's report for January 3, 1890 shows that after three years the amount of cash in the bank was but \$50, with interest thereon of \$5.40. At this meeting it appeared that the State of New Jersey had appropriated \$15,000 for the monument, on the understanding that the citizens of Princeton would raise another \$15,000 and that we might then call upon the Congress of the United States to appropriate \$30,000. But Princeton was not accustomed in those days to financial drives, and by Jan. 4, 1892 the Treasurer reported a total of only \$110.42. From year to year Professor Cameron reported progress as to his efforts to secure legislation from Congress, and gradually the fund grew until by

March 13, 1902, the subscriptions amounted to \$4069. These subscriptions were, however, almost entirely promises, as the cash in the bank by Jan. 3, 1907 amounted to only \$270. At this meeting resolutions were passed in memory of the late Prof. Henry C. Cameron who had served as Chairman of the Association for twenty years.

An important question relative to the site of the monument was raised by Professor Libbey at the meeting of the Trustees held June 5, 1907. He advocated the erection of a suitable monument on the ridge upon which the Thomas Clark, now the Hale House, stands—this being a prominent site on the field where the actual battle took place. This view was warmly seconded by General Woodhull. It also appeared that Mr. Owsley, owner of considerable property on the above mentioned ridge, offered to the Association gratuitously a plot of ground 100 or 150 feet square, and to join with his neighbor Mr. Hale in offering an access to it from the highway. This offer was gratefully acknowledged by the Association. The Association, however, had for twenty years considered the battle monument as commemorating an event rather than a geographical spot and strongly desired a more central location. The corner store, then owned by Mrs. Vandewater, situated at the junction of Mercer and Stockton Streets, was then held at \$20,000, and offered at somewhat less if it could be held by the owners for a year. It soon appeared that the somewhat larger property immediately back of the corner store (valued at \$18,000) was owned by Mr. M. Taylor Pyne, who

generously offered to present it should the corner store be finally secured for the monument. On June 28, letters of thanks were despatched to Mr. Owsley, Mr. Hale, and Mr. Pyne for their patriotic offers.

Meanwhile the Association was being spurred to a decision by the action of the State of New Jersey which declared that their subscription of \$30,000 would lapse by November 1, 1907, unless \$15,000 were raised by the Association by that date.

Inasmuch as on October 9, 1907 the subscriptions were less than \$10,000, the selection of another site seemed to be imperative. It was accordingly determined to place the monument at the point of intersection of Nassau Street and Bayard Lane on a circle of 40 ft. diameter. Through the generosity of Messrs. John W. and Robert Garrett, A. D. Russell and others, Mr. Pyne succeeded in raising the total subscription to an amount which made it possible to purchase the corner store property, thus securing for the monument more spacious surroundings. The new site though too restricted for an imposing monument was made possible by the generosity of the Borough Council and of the owners of the Princeton Inn. The Inn Company deeded to the Association a plot of ground adjoining the circle, and Mr. Garrett agreed to modify the entrance to his property for the same purpose.

This site was accepted by the Association on October 24, 1907, with but one dissenting vote. At this meeting also the Princeton Battle Monument Association disbanded and the execution of its wishes was entrusted, in accordance with the act of 1902, to a Commission consisting of the following State officers:

The Comptroller of the Treasury of the State of New Jersey,

The Quartermaster-General of the State of New Jersey,

The Adjutant-General of the State of New Jersey,

The President of the Senate of the State of New Jersey,

The Speaker of the House of Assembly of the State of New Jersey,

and five representatives from Princeton, Messrs. William Libbey, Allan Marquand, M. Taylor Pyne, Charles S. Robinson and Bayard Stockton.

A further change in the problem of site occurred when on June 12, 1912, Mr. Howard Russell Butler published in the Alumni Weekly, the article called "A Proposed Small Park for Princeton." The plan involved a modification of the juncture of Mercer Street with Nassau, so as to produce a small park, village green or plaza. Mr. Butler's notion was primarily to produce a public park or breathing place in the centre of town, but with this park was associated that of a site for the Battle Monument. In Mr. Butler's view the park would afford an area in which might well be erected a monument of exedral type from which an unobstructed view of Holder Tower might be obtained. The park was a welcome addition to Princeton. It was made practicable through the generosity of Mr. M. Taylor Pyne, of the Nassau Club, of an alumnus, and nearly one hundred other subscribers to a fund of \$25,645 required to purchase land from Mr.

Joseph Priest, to move his house back, to build the Mercer Street extension, the Bayard Lane extension, to lay out the paths and effect the landscape gardening of the park. But this small park site, excellent as it was for a small exedral monument, was more and more seen to be inappropriate for an important national monument.

The site at the junction of Nassau Street, Stockton Street, and Bayard Lane was indeed contracted, even after the owner of the Princeton Inn and of the Garrett property had contributed to its enlargement. But it had the advantage of having an approach from almost the entire length of Nassau Street, a vista framed by magnificent trees on either side and with a lawn and trees in the background that the Commission hoped might be permanent. As the loss of this monumental site now seemed imminent, the sculptor was roused to leave his work and interests in France and return to New York where he could be in closer touch with the conditions surrounding the Princeton monument. He was so affected by the thought of his great monument being sidetracked that he offered personally to subscribe a large sum if more space could be secured for the Princeton Inn site. It was this offer that led the Commission to make an effort to secure this site. It was again Mr. M. Taylor Pyne who took the lead in this matter. The Battle Monument Commission subscribed all of its reserve fund and the stockholders of the Princeton Inn met them more than half way, not only giving up their expectations for a more lucrative sale, but contributing personally to give the Battle

Monument this very suitable setting. The transaction meant to the Princeton Inn owners the wiping out of mortgages and other indebtedness to the amount of some \$30,000, and to the people of Princeton it meant the establishment of a central park commensurate in dignity with the monument itself. This tract of land extended nearly from the axis of the line of horse-chestnut trees in front of the Inn, to Stockton Street on the South, and to a projected street on the West separating the monument field from the historic grounds of Morven. When this transaction had been effected the property was transferred in 1916 to the State of New Jersey. Deeds for the corner store property and the lots immediately behind it were also presented to the State.

The history of the site having been briefly set forth, let us now consider the successive stages of the problem concerning the form and character of the monument. The *first* definite proposition to come before us was the offer of \$1000. if the memorial should take the form of a public library. A venerable theological professor made this offer, remarking that he was not interested in other forms of monuments, although he might possibly contribute the last \$100. to make the memorial a success. But we could not conceive that the Congress of the United States and the Legislature of New Jersey, to both of which we looked for large contributions, would consent to celebrate the battle of Princeton by the founding of a local public library. The *second* proposition—the one which had been primarily in the minds of the promoters of the enterprise



—was that we erect a lofty shaft. This they declared could be seen from the Pennsylvania Railroad—an evidence that little Princeton even in those days had aspirations which later Messrs. Day and Klauder, and Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson have done so much to fulfill. Today, to those who travel on the Pennsylvania Railroad, Princeton is no longer a hidden hamlet, but like S. Gimignano, a city of many towers. It was at this time that I struggled with the Association to delegate the designing of the monument to Mr. Augustus St. Gaudens, our foremost sculptor. But one of our professors had seen the Nelson Monument in Trafalgar Square and preferred to design it himself. His commonplace shaft did not elicit general enthusiasm, and, as our efforts in lobbying at Washington were unavailing—the Princeton Battle Monument project fell asleep. This sleep lasted for twenty years.

By 1907 the moving spirits of the old Battle Monument Association had passed away and new men and other minds took the lead. In this very year Augustus St. Gaudens was laid to rest, so the problem of selecting a capable sculptor had to be faced anew. We were strongly advised by an experienced friend against an open competition, and soon ascertained that men of established reputations were unwilling to risk their efforts on an uncertain chance. So we selected our sculptor, Mr. Frederick MacMonnies, and left the form of the monument largely in his hands. The solution first suggested by Mr. MacMonnies was that of a Nike upon a circular pedestal. Rough sketches were made by an assistant suggesting various colour



schemes, white and gold, pink and green, etc. These sketches, much to Mr. MacMonnies' regret, were exhibited in public. Art critics now sprang up on every side. Those whose hearts were set upon an equestrian statue thought that any allegorical figure, however beautiful, failed to give specific credit to the great general whose strategy at the battle of Princeton turned the stream of history into a new channel. Those who were familiar with the monuments of Greece did not hesitate to remind us that to place the Nike of Samothrace upon the Monument of Lysicrates was too obvious a utilization of ancient memorials. Our architectural friends found fault with the mouldings even before their actual form had been determined. But the most damning criticism came from an artist who suggested that we were obtaining a very meagre result in return for a considerable outlay of money. What could be more distressing to a liberal subscriber than to be told by a supposed expert that we were not getting our money's worth!

This criticism was not transmitted to the sculptor, but his mind may have been at work along this line, for before we had turned down the suggestion of a Nike monument, he sent us a sketch of a colossal figure which he called the Republic. This went through various phases whose forms may have been shaped by available models. One might be described as the Robust Republic, helmeted, holding a short sword and a standard crowned with a wreath; the *second*, the Aspiring Republic, was more warlike, carrying a shield as well as a sword, and with gaze directed to the skies; a

*third*, the Stately Republic, was more reposeful, an Athena Promachos with shield and sword standing in the midst of warlike trophies; a *fourth*, the Picturesque Republic, more peaceful and ideal. Her shield and sword were mere symbols, hardly weapons of warfare. The noise of battle was surely a matter of the past as this tall, slender goddess, standing in a bark, laden with trophies, glided across a river. On the whole this was the most attractive of the Republics, though the hint of crossing the Delaware recalled to local patriots what took place at Trenton rather than at Princeton.

The artist during the year of 1911 was most active; the critics also were not asleep. If the Nike monument was too small, a colossal Republic in little, rural Princeton was surely cast on too large a scale. It might have been suitably located in some spacious square in a large city, but was hardly fitted to take the place of the Nike of the crossways. The justice of this criticism was felt by the sculptor. Not yet discouraged, he struck out on a new line. Inspired by Rude's Bellona relief on the Arc de Triomphe he designed in 1912 a terminal monument, on the façade of which rides General Washington in the midst of a small band of troops pushed back, falling, or dead, while from their midst emerged an imposing winged figure of Victory or Liberty leading them forward. This relief was accepted by the Battle Monument Commission, although they were not satisfied with the somewhat Egyptian character of the supporting screen or pylon. The photograph of such a monument set

in the crossways also brought out clearly the inadequacy of the site for so important a structure. It was during this year that Mr. Howard Russell Butler planned the small park not far from the crossways, and with praiseworthy ambition wished the monument to stand as the terminus of this little park. At this time the size of the monument became an important factor. As planned by the sculptor it was out of scale with a little park. We had a dummy erected in the park and then realized that the services of an architect would be necessary to determine questions of scale and proportion. Mr. MacMonnies selected as his associate his friend Mr. Thomas Hastings, to whom we owe the architectural character of the completed monument. This left Mr. MacMonnies free to work upon the relief alone.

In 1914 came the war, with the Germans threatening to pass through Giverny where the studio of Mr. MacMonnies was located. Mr. MacMonnies turned his house into a hospital and found it impossible to secure assistants or to complete his work in France. With great difficulty he had a cast made from his model, which after prolonged delays he had transported to New York, where it arrived in the late spring of 1916. He was also anxious to influence the Commission, if possible, to revert to the more monumental site on the axis of Nassau Street. Notwithstanding the fact that many Princetonians had subscribed already and most liberally to secure land for the monument, a last effort was made, the property in front of the Princeton Inn

secured, and deeded to the State of New Jersey. It remained only to find the most suitable location on this new park. After shifting an improvised dummy from one end of the park to the other we finally located it on the continuation of the axis of Nassau Street and toward the further end of the lot, where it would have a fine approach and not be too close to the historic estate of Morven whose independence it was desirable to retain.

The sculptor now freed from care devoted his enthusiasm to the improvement of the composition of his relief. One fault in Rude's relief is its lack of unity. Our interest is divided between the dramatic, screaming figure of Bellona above, and the quiet, departing volunteers below. So one's eyes might have turned alternately in MacMonnies' early design from the stately figure of Washington to the moving figure of Victory. Not sparing himself any effort to perfect his composition he did not hesitate to destroy the magnificent outspread wings of Victory and to move the heavy figures about from one position to another.

As the composition now stands, Washington, like a tower of strength, serene yet anxious, advances on a wearied steed over icy ground in the midst of his stalwart band. In the background are the soldiers who have not yet reached the front. In the foreground to the right is a drummer boy shivering with cold, to the left is General Mercer falling, next to him a man of middle age, confident and strong, and an elderly soldier bracing himself for a final effort. In the central foreground Liberty grasps a shattered stan-

dard from the hands of a dying soldier while another is already dead at her feet. In fact, "Liberty or Death" is the inspiring thought of the entire composition. On the low relief below we read: Princeton, January 3, 1777.

On each of the narrow sides of the supporting screen are coats of arms of Princeton, of New Jersey and of the remaining twelve of the original thirteen states. On the rear of the monument is the following inscription composed by Dean West:

HERE MEMORY LINGERS  
 TO RECALL  
 THE GUIDING MIND  
 WHOSE DARING PLAN  
 OUTFLANKED THE FOE  
 AND TURNED DISMAY TO HOPE  
 WHEN WASHINGTON  
 WITH SWIFT RESOLVE  
 MARCHED THROUGH THE NIGHT  
 TO FIGHT AT DAWN  
 AND VENTURE ALL  
 IN ONE VICTORIOUS BATTLE  
 FOR OUR FREEDOM

*Saecula Praetereunt Rapimur Nos Ultro Morantes  
 Adsis Tu Patriae Saecula Qui Dirigis*

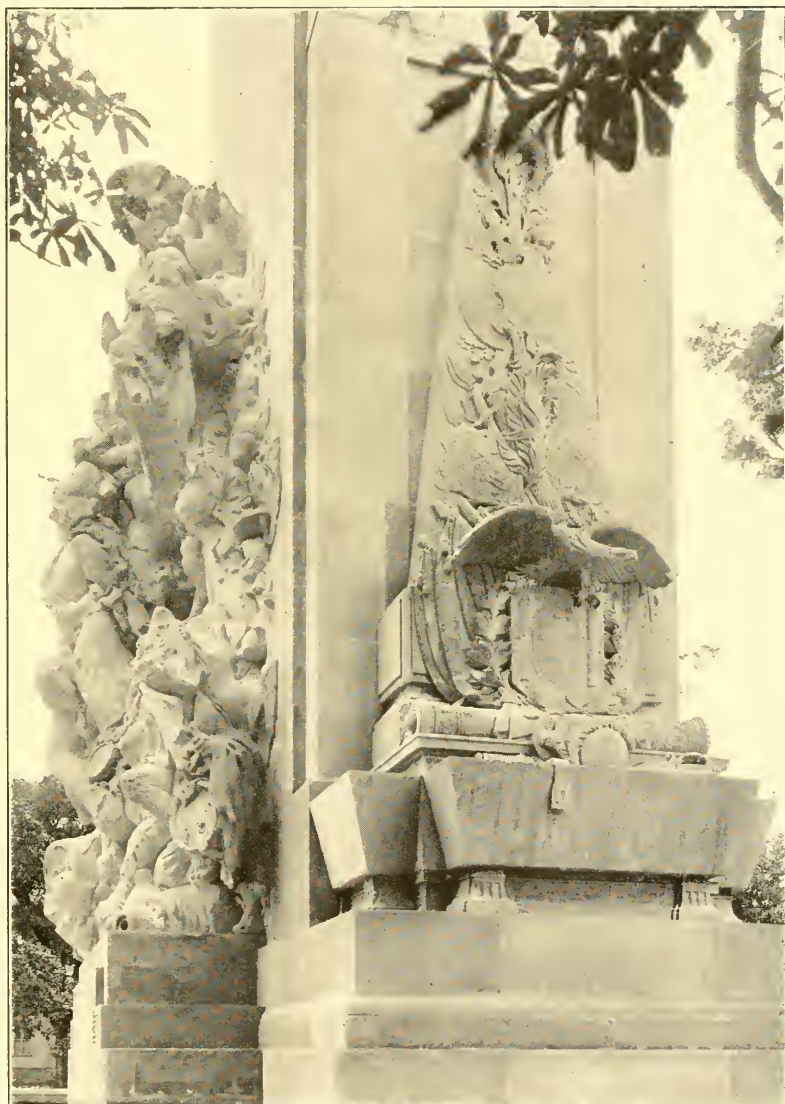
ALLAN MARQUAND.



AN ACCOUNT OF THE DEDICATION  
OF THE PRINCETON BATTLE  
MONUMENT, JUNE 9, 1922







Photograph by Turner



## AN ACCOUNT OF THE DEDICATION OF THE PRINCETON BATTLE MONUMENT, JUNE 9, 1922

Certainly no community in New Jersey and perhaps few in our country are richer in historical associations than the town of Princeton. She stands deeply rooted in old Colonial times, and she has lived through the great crises in America's history. Nor has she been merely a passive spectator. In the years that bind us to the past Princeton has therefore been privileged to play an important rôle in the making of our country. It is the part of patriotism to keep alive such associations, and Princeton has been rich in impressive commemorations. The latest and in many ways the most important of these was the dedication, on June 9, 1922, of the Princeton Battle Monument, erected as a lasting memorial to those who participated in Washington's critical campaign of the winter of 1776 and 1777.

The history of the Battle of Princeton as well as of the project to erect a monument has already been told. It remains for us merely to give an account of the ceremonies which marked its dedication. The crisis so forcibly and beautifully presented in MacMonnies' monument marks so critical a turning point in American history that it was evident that it could be fittingly dedicated only by the President of the United States in person. It seemed for a long time that with the many demands upon President Harding's time and

energies it would be impossible to secure his presence. Finally, however, through persevering efforts on the parts of the Honorable Bayard Stockton, President of the Battle Monument Commission, and of Mayor Charles Browne of Princeton, he consented to make the trip and the date for the dedication was consequently set at his convenience.

President and Mrs. Harding arrived at Somerville on the evening of June eighth and spent the night at the home of Senator Joseph Sherman Frelinghuysen. From there they came by automobile to Princeton, arriving a little after noon. They were accompanied by Senator Walter Evans Edge, Speaker Frederick Huntington Gillett of the House of Representatives and Mrs. Gillett, the President's physician, General Charles E. Sawyer, and the President's secretary, Mr. George B. Christian Jr. Mayor Charles Browne met the President's party on the Rocky Hill road. The President entered the mayor's car and rode with him to Princeton. When they reached the foot of Bayard lane, the President was greeted by the customary salute of twenty-one guns, fired by the Field Artillery Unit of Princeton University, and at the head of Bayard Lane the First Troop of the Philadelphia City Cavalry, under Captain Clement Wood, was drawn up in dress uniform. This beplumed squadron galloping along before and behind the President's car gave an impressive military air to the occasion, which was heightened by the presence of the Fifth Maryland Infantry, United States National Guard, under Colonel Wash-

ington Bowie, which had come that morning from Baltimore dressed in a uniform patterned on that of Revolutionary times. The Fifth Maryland served as guard of honor to the monument and the Philadelphia City Cavalry Troop acted as the President's body guard during his stay in Princeton. Of the troops which were engaged at the Battle of Princeton, these are the only two units which still maintain a corporate military existence.

The Philadelphia City Troop escorted the President to Morven, the historic residence of the Honorable Bayard Stockton, direct descendant of Richard Stockton, signer of the Declaration of Independence. Over the door of Morven hung the flag used by Commodore Robert F. Stockton, grandfather of Bayard Stockton, when he commanded the Battleship "Princeton." After a moment's rest, the President, accompanied by Mr. Stockton and the guests of the occasion, were escorted to the monument and took their places at its base.

The guests of honor included, as representatives of the United States Government, in addition to President Harding, Major Lyon representing the Secretary of War, and General Charles E. Sawyer. The Senate was represented by Senators Frelinghuysen and Edge, and the House of Representatives by Speaker Gillett and Representatives Appleby, Ackerman, and Hutchinson. The State of New Jersey honored itself and the occasion by sending Governor Edwards, who was accompanied by the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House, the Comptroller of the Treas-

## 28 DEDICATION OF THE MONUMENT

ury, the Quartermaster General, the Adjutant General, the five officers who have served as ex-officio members of the Princeton Battle Monument Commission. The Princeton members of the Commission consisted of the Honorable Bayard Stockton, Chairman, Allan Marquand, Secretary, and Charles S. Robinson, Treasurer. President Hibben represented Princeton University and Mayor Charles Browne the Town of Princeton. On the base of the monument there were also seated Frederick MacMonnies, the sculptor of the monument, Master Bayard Stockton III, who was to unveil it, and Dr. Henry van Dyke and the Right Reverend Bishop Paul Matthews who were to take part in the ceremony.\*

On the arrival of the President, the crowd rose while the band, under the leadership of Mr. Adolph Hirschberg, played the "Star Spangled Banner." The

\* The following organizations were represented at the ceremony by a delegate or delegation. The American Academy of Arts and Letters, The American Federation of Arts, The Architectural League, The Commission of Fine Arts, The Huguenot Society, The Municipal Art Society, Trenton Historical Society, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The American Legion, The Society of Cincinnati, Society of Colonial Dames, Society of Colonial Wars, Daughters of the American Revolution, Daughters of Holland Dames, Descendants of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence, Order of Founders and Patriots of America, Grand Army of the Republic, Lords of the Manor, Old Barracks Association, Revolutionary Memorial Society, Sons of the Revolution, Sons of the American Revolution, The Sulgrave Institution, Washington Headquarters Association of Montclair, Washington Headquarters Association of Morristown, The Monmouth Battle Monument Commission.

monument was draped by a great American flag which entirely concealed it. The exercises were opened by an invocation by the Right Reverend Paul Matthews, Bishop of the Diocese of New Jersey. Bishop Matthews expressed the sentiment that the most fitting invocation that could possibly be pronounced on such an occasion was Washington's Prayer for the welfare of his country, which reads as follows:

“Almighty God, we make our earnest prayer that Thou wilt keep the United States in Thy holy protection, that Thou wilt incline the hearts of the citizens to cultivate a spirit of subordination and obedience to government; to entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another and for their fellow citizens of the United States at large. And finally that Thou wilt most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility and pacific temper of mind which were the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed religion, and without an humble imitation of whose example in these things we can never hope to be a happy nation. Grant our supplication, we beseech Thee, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.”

At its close the audience joined in repeating the Lord's Prayer.

The monument was then unveiled by Master Bayard Stockton III, nine year old son of Richard Stockton III. This young lad, grandson of the Pres-



ident of the Battle Monument Commission, raised the folds of the flag which was then hauled to the top, disclosing for the first time the finished monument.

At this point there occurred one of the most interesting incidents in the dedicatory exercises, the flag ceremony by the Sons of the Revolution, under the direction of the flag officer of that patriotic organization, Colonel William Libbey. At the moment when the large flag which had covered the monument was withdrawn, a color guard marched down the central aisle and the standard of the United States was carried forward by the sergeant of the guard and placed directly in the center of the platform. Thirteen other flags of Colonial and early Revolutionary days were in the meantime arranged in a line on either side of the officers of the guard. These standards represented:

1. Flag of the State of New Jersey.
2. Colors of the Society of the Sons of the Revolution.
3. The first national flag of the United States with thirteen stars and thirteen stripes.
4. The Continental or Grand Union flag used at Cambridge, Massachusetts, January 1, 1776.
5. The Crescent Flag of Fort Sullivan, South Carolina, which was the first American flag used in the South during the Revolution.
6. The Rattlesnake Flag, carried by several organizations of the American army, but particularly by the naval vessels, notably the "Surprise" and the



"Revenge," consisting of a rattlesnake upon a background of thirteen alternate red and blue stripes, with the motto "Don't tread on me" under the snake.

7. The Flag of the Continental Navy, a yellow standard with a rattlesnake rearing its crest and shaking its thirteen rattles.

8. Naval Privateer Flag used in 1776.

9. Flag of the Commander-in-chief, a white silk banner carried by Washington's Life Guard, bearing the motto of the Guard—"Conquer or Die," and used all through the war from Boston to Trenton, Princeton, and Yorktown.

10. The Headquarters Flag, used to mark the quarters of the Commander-in-chief.

11. The Flag of Pulaski's Legion, a cavalry guidon carried by Count Pulaski until his death at Savannah, Georgia, in 1779.

12. The Floating Batteries Flag, used by the two floating batteries in Boston Harbor in October 1775, bearing a pine tree on a white field and carrying the motto "An Appeal to Heaven."

13. The Royal or Bourbon Flag, of white silk with fleurs-de-lys in gold, and used by the French allied forces during the Revolution.

After these old flags had been drawn up in line at the base of the monument, the national standard was saluted by dipping these original and subsidiary flags and recovering them. They were then carried in two lines to either side of the American flag and thus arranged, remained in position until the close of the exercises.

After this ceremony the monument was presented to the Princeton Battle Monument Commission by the sculptor, Frederick MacMonnies, who spoke as follows:

"Mr. President, Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen:

"After years of labor and delays of all sorts we present to you this completed memorial.

"I wish to express my appreciation and thanks to my collaborators:

"To the distinguished members of the Battle Monument Commission, for their confidence, indulgence and patience;

"To Dean West for his eloquent inscription;

"To Thomas Hastings for his appropriate and stately architecture;

"And I wish to extend my grateful thanks to the Builders, Matthews, the Piccarelli Brothers, and to Mr. Garatti, the carver of the monument.

"All these collaborators have aimed at the highest perfection and, it seems to me, they have succeeded, and if my sculpture has one tenth the merit of their work, the monument will speak for itself."

The Honorable Bayard Stockton, President of the Princeton Battle Monument Commission, accepted it in the name of the Commission in the following words:

"Mr. MacMonnies:—On behalf of The Princeton Battle Monument Commission, I accept with gratitude and admiration this wonderful and artistic creation

in which you have depicted one of the greatest events in American History. So important was the battle of Princeton as a factor in establishing our independence, that its memorial calls for the exercise of the highest genius. You have with patient effort finished in everlasting stone so fine a tribute to American valor and patriotism that men will from it interpret the high motive and stern resolve that characterized the men of 1776.

"Your genius is frozen in an indestructible form so that those who come after us will read, with American history, the story of your artistic conception, its wonderful charm, its brilliant beauty and its marvelous result.

"You have produced the finest Battle Monument in America, if not in the world, and your fame as an artist will live, as expressed in this stone, through the ages to come."

Mr. Stockton then transferred the monument to the State of New Jersey; addressing Governor Edward Irving Edwards, he said:

"Governor Edwards: In 1888, the Legislature of this State authorized the appointment of a commission to erect this monument. It is built on land owned by the State of New Jersey, and the State has generously contributed toward its cost.

"No history of the work of this commission would be complete without mentioning the unceasing devotion of Professor Henry Clay Cameron, the first President of the Association, the great generosity and personal

interest of Moses Taylor Pyne, and the hearty and successful coöperation of Hon. Ira W. Wood, the member of Congress from this district when the act appropriating \$30,000 to our monument was passed and approved.

"The work of the Princeton Battle Monument Commission is now finished, and it only remains for the Commission to turn over the completed structure to you as the Chief Magistrate of the State of New Jersey, and this I now do."

In accepting the monument for the State of New Jersey, Governor Edwards pledged the State to preserve the monument and ever to cherish the sacred memories which it commemorated.

Governor Edwards was followed by Dr. Henry van Dyke of the Princeton Class of 1873, former United States Minister to Holland, who read his "Ballad of Princeton Battle" written particularly for this occasion.

Following the reading of Dr. van Dyke's poem, the Chairman introduced President Harding in the following words:

"The gracious presence here today of the President of the United States is a matter of great pride and gratification. Escorted as he is by the Philadelphia City Troop and the Fifth Regiment of Maryland Infantry, both of which organizations took part in the original battle of Princeton, and standing in the shadow of the history of the battle which was the turning point in our struggle for independence, as recorded in im-

perishable stone, the setting is a fitting one to mark the first visit of the President to Princeton.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I take pleasure in presenting you to the President of the United States."

The audience rose to greet President Harding, who addressed them as follows:

My Fellow Americans:

We have come here to say the formal words of dedication and consecration before a monument in stone. But we stand, to say those words, in the presence of another monument, which is the true memorial to the events we celebrate. The real monument to the achievement of Washington's patriot army in the Trenton-Princeton campaign, is not to be sought in the work of hands or in memorials of stone. It rears itself in the institutions of liberty and representative government, now big in the vision of all mankind.

In the presence of such a monument, we can do no better than consecrate ourselves to the cause in which at this place the soul of genius and the spirit of sacrifice shone forth with steadfast radiance. On no other battle-ground, in presence of no other memorial of heroism, could we find more assuring illumination for our hopes, our anticipations, our confidence. Here the genius of General Washington reached the height of its brilliancy in action. Here his followers wrote their highest testimony of valor. Here liberty-seeking devotion struggled through privation and unbelievable exertion, to gain the heights. The crimsoned prints of numbed and bleeding feet marked the route a pathway to eternal glory. Thither they trudged through storm and torrent; but from here, in the hour of victory, went out winged messengers to let all men know that liberty was safe in the keeping of her sons.

Point me the field of strife, to which have converged more roads that led through discouragement, calamity, and all justification for despair! And point me, next, that field from whence radiated so many highways of the buoyant heart, the confident hope, the indomitable purpose, the will to win! Take down the tomes, thumb all the blackest, all the fairest pages, and tell me where you read of nobler, finer,—aye, or more fruitful—sacrifices of men for their fellows!

Here, among you to whom the traditions of those events are a sacred trust, is no place for recounting the discouragement of the patriot cause, the low ebb of Continental fortunes, the seeming that final disaster could not long be stayed. Almost from the day, in the preceding summer, when the great Declaration had been issued, misfortune had followed on misfortune's heel—Long Island, the loss of New York, the surrender of the Hudson forts, the retreat across New Jersey, the refuge in Pennsylvania. It was all leading toward the seemingly inevitable end. The army was crumbling, only civil authority pretended to maintain any central organ. The enemy delayed to finish his task, only because he was so certain of his quarry that haste would be unseemly.

And then, the flash of Washington's defiance! The crossing of the Delaware in storm and ice floes; the march, and the delays which made it impossible to effect a night attack and a complete surprise; Washington's stern and fateful decision to press on and stake everything on the issue; finally, the attack, and the victory.

Brilliant as was the accomplishment, Washington, on the Jersey side, was faced presently by the superior strength of the new consolidated British forces. At last his rival was sure of "the old fox." Then came the strategic withdrawal by Washington at night, in

secret, from his line on the Assunpink Creek, the flanking march to Princeton, and the second surprise and defeat of the enemy. In the narrative of those magnificent winter days of marching and fighting, surprises and victories, one finds the truest presentation of the indomitable spirit which sustained, and, at last, won the Revolution.

It is not often that the precise importance and significance of a particular military detail can be so accurately appraised, as it can regarding the midwinter campaign of Trenton-Princeton. The promulgation of the Declaration of Independence had moved the British authorities to especially determined efforts for quick suppression of the revolution. To them it was vitally important that the fires of revolt be smothered before the new feeling of nationality had risen to make the Colonists realize the substantial unity of their cause and their interests. The strategy of the British invasion of New Jersey has been bitterly criticised many times, but it must always be remembered that there is an intimate relationship between political conditions and military operations, and that in this case the political situation was certain to depend very greatly on military developments. The destruction of Washington's army would almost have snuffed out the revolution. It would have given a demonstration of the overwhelming preponderance of British power, which even the most stout-hearted patriot would have found difficult to deny. On the other hand, Washington perceived both the military and the political opportunity presented to him in the disposition of the enemy's forces. There was a desperate chance to win a telling victory which would convert the New Jersey campaign into a disaster for the enemy; and there was also the possibility of winning a political victory by demonstrating the capacity of American leadership and



American soldiers to outwit and outfight veterans of European battlefields.

Washington, who was at once soldier, politician and statesman, recognized all these possibilities. He seized the opportunity, he turned it completely to his own advantage, and thereby inspired his army and the country behind him with a new confidence in themselves. Years afterward, Lord Cornwallis, and the members of his staff, were given a dinner by General Washington, following the surrender at Yorktown. The compliments of the occasion were exchanged in a manner so gracious and amiable that, as we read of it now, it is difficult to realize all their significance. Among the rest, Lord Cornwallis made a speech in which he paid his compliments to the military genius of Washington. Comparing the Yorktown campaign with the Trenton-Princeton operation, he declared, turning to General Washington, and bowing profoundly, that, "When history shall have made up its verdict, the fairest laurels will be gathered for your Excellency, not from the shores of the Chesapeake, but from the banks of the Delaware." Cornwallis regarded the Trenton-Princeton campaign as the crowning glory of the Washington military career; and we do not need to be reminded of the verdict of Frederick the Great, who ranked the Trenton-Princeton campaign as the most brilliant of which he had knowledge.

When we view the course of human affairs from the detached standpoint of history's student, we are amazed to discover how seldom a particular military operation has determined the results of a campaign or the outcome of a great war. Wars are writ very big in history; very much bigger sometimes than they deserve to be. Battles have seldom decided the fates of peoples. The real story of human progress is written elsewhere than on the world's battlefields, and war



and conflict have provided rather its punctuation than its theme. But among the exceptions, among the cases in which a particular conflict has had consequences and reverberations far greater in their potency than could possibly be imagined from a consideration of the numbers engaged or the immediate results, none stands out more distinctly than does the Trenton-Princeton campaign. We cannot say that the cause of independence and union would have been lost without it; but we must find ourselves at a loss if we attempt to picture the successful conclusion of the revolution, had there been another and different issue from the struggle of those hard, midwinter days.

The climax of that desperate adventure came on the field of Princeton. Trenton had been an almost complete surprise, an easy victory. Princeton was a desperately contested engagement whose immediate result included not only an enheartening of the patriot cause, but a profound discouragement to those on the other side of the Atlantic, who were responsible for the continuation of the war. So you have erected here at Princeton a fitting memorial to the heroes and heroism of that day. We bring and lay at its foot the laurel wreaths which gratitude and patriotic sentiment will always dedicate to those who have borne the heat and burden of the conflict. Let us believe that their example in all of the future may be, as thus far it has been, a glorious inspiration to our country.

Discarding his manuscript at the end of the address, President Harding stepped slightly forward and said:

Mr. Stockton, before I conclude I want to be just a bit informal. If I had found no other compensation in a trip to Princeton, it would have been in two things new to my experience.

Pointing to the various revolutionary flags that had been draped against the monument by Sons of the American Revolution, he went on:

One was the presentation of the colors, beautifully done, where I saw for the first time the combination of the colors that represented the hopes and aspirations and determinations of the early American patriots who gave us our independence and union, and then saw those colors blended into one supreme banner of Americanism—our dear Old Glory.

Turning to the guard of honor dressed in uniforms of a century ago, President Harding continued:

The other compensation, my countrymen, was in seeing the Philadelphia Troop and the infantrymen of the Fifth Maryland. It is not so much in the men themselves and the wonderful appearance they made today, but the compensation is in the thought that these organizations have been in continuous service since the days of the American Revolution.

They stand today and typify those who gave us independence and freedom. I think it is well, my countrymen, and I like this monument. I like every memorial to American patriotism and American sacrifices. No land can do too much to cherish with all its heart and soul these great inheritances.

Somehow there comes to my mind the assurances that in the preservation of these organizations of the Philadelphia Troop and the Fifth Maryland there is a tie running back to the immortal beginning of this American Republic, and we of today and the veterans of the World War, the sons and daughters of the men who go on, will keep these supreme inheritances and carry them on to a fulfillment of a great American destiny.

## DEDICATION OF THE MONUMENT 41

President Harding spoke eloquently and with deep feeling, and at the close of his address the audience rose and applauded for many minutes. The ceremony was concluded by the great gathering rising again to sing "My Country, 'Tis of Thee."

CHRISTIAN GAUSS.



A BALLAD OF PRINCETON BATTLE



## A BALLAD OF PRINCETON BATTLE\*

**A** LONG Assunpink's woody bank we left our camp-  
fires bright,  
While like a fox with padded feet we stole away by night ;  
Cornwallis watched his Trenton trap,  
And drained his glass, and took his nap ;  
But the ragged troops of Washington outflanked him in  
the night,—  
Up and away for Princeton,  
By a secret road to Princeton,—  
We dragged our guns with muffled wheels to win another  
fight.

The icy trail was hard as iron, our footprints marked it  
red ;  
Our frosty breath went up like smoke to the winking stars  
o'erhead ;  
By Bear Swamp and by Miry Run,  
Our muskets weighed at least a ton ;  
We shivered, till o'er Stony Brook we saw the sun rise  
red ;  
Weary we tramped to Princeton ;  
But all of us at Princeton,  
Would follow our Chief through thick and thin till the  
last of us was dead.

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\* This ballad is intended to be a plain story of the battle of Princeton as told and interpreted by one who took part in it and who was at the same time a graduate of Princeton College, say such a man as Colonel Joseph Read, of the class of 1757."

46    A BALLAD OF PRINCETON BATTLE

We looked beyond the upper bridge, across the swollen  
stream,

And there along the King's highway, we saw the redcoats  
gleam;

'Twas Mawhood's regiment marching down

To finish us off at Trenton town!

"Go cut the bridge,"—and Mercer's men crept up along  
the stream.

But the British turned towards Princeton,

Came bravely back for Princeton;

And all the rest of that dim hour was wilder than a dream.

They rushed thro' Will Clark's orchard, among the naked  
trees;

With horse and foot they hammered hard; their bullets  
sang like bees;

And Mercer fell, and Haslet fell;

The bayonets cut us up like hell;

The chain-shot mowed a bloody path beneath the twisted  
trees.

It looked all black for Princeton,

We lost our hopes of Princeton;

We wavered, and we broke and fled as leaves before the  
breeze.



A BALLAD OF PRINCETON BATTLE 47

Then down the hill from Tom Clark's house, rode Wash-  
ington aflame

With holy ire, through smoke and fire, like mighty Mars  
he came.

"Come on, my men, parade with me,  
We'll make the braggart redcoats flee."—

And up the hill, against the guns, rode Washington aflame.

He turned the tide at Princeton;

The land was saved at Princeton;

And they who fought, and they who fell, won liberty and  
fame.

Men praise our Chief for weighty words, for counsel  
calm and high,

For prudence and enduring will, for cool, far-seeing eye:

One thing he had all else above,—

Courage that caught the soldier's love,

And made the soldier's loyal heart in danger's hour beat  
high.

We saw it clear at Princeton;

'Twas written here at Princeton:

*The men who make a nation great are men who dare to  
die.*

Avalon,  
May 22, 1922.

HENRY VAN DYKE.



## THE BATTLE OF PRINCETON







## THE BATTLE OF PRINCETON

At no time during the Revolution was the American cause at a lower ebb than in the winter of 1776-1777. Washington had just experienced a series of disasters so staggering that many doubted his ability longer to keep the field. Defeated on Long Island, driven out of Manhattan, forced to relinquish the forts that guarded the lower Hudson, he had withdrawn his shattered army into New Jersey to take post behind the Raritan. The campaign had so far resulted in the loss of the port of New York, the partial severing of the New England from the Middle States, the capture of thousands of Continental troops with great quantities of stores and arms and ammunition.

At Brunswick Washington escaped almost certain destruction only through the mistake of General Howe in directing Cornwallis to delay the attack until he himself had arrived at the front. When, a week later, he came up to take command in person, the opportunity had passed, and the Americans were well on their way to the Delaware. Posting Lord Stirling at Princeton to cover his further retreat, Washington, with admirable coolness, perfected his arrangements for abandoning New Jersey, and by the time the Hessian vanguard had reached Trenton, his entire force was safely ensconced on the other side of the river.

But even then his condition was critical. His force was so worn down by constant fighting, sickness and desertions, that it could have made no effective resistance to the enemy. Some of the best regiments, regiments that had marched out with well filled ranks, now mustered only from fifty to one hundred men. The troops were destitute of proper clothing, food was often not to be had, they were almost without cavalry, their arms were antiquated and greatly inferior to those of the enemy. Cold, hungry, dispirited, they made a sad contrast with Howe's well drilled and splendidly equipped regiments of regulars.

Washington was filled with solicitude for the American cause. Although to his officers and men he had revealed only his accustomed composure, to his own brother he unbosomed his troubles and fears. "You can have no idea of the perplexity of my situation," he wrote. "No man, I believe, ever had a greater choice of difficulties, and less means to extricate himself from them."<sup>1</sup> And if his brave spirit trembled for the future, the perturbation of citizens and soldiers may well be imagined. Many officers, deeming the cause lost beyond recall, actually considered the advisability of accepting the royal pardon and relinquishing the struggle.<sup>2</sup> Congress, in alarm lest Philadelphia be captured, fled to Baltimore. Everywhere the Loyalists were elated, everywhere the revolutionists despaired.

At this juncture General Howe decided to suspend

<sup>1</sup> Trevelyan, *The American Revolution*, Part II, Vol II, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> Nuts for Future Historians to Crack, p. 28.



further military operations until the spring. Instead of pushing on across the Delaware, capturing Philadelphia and pursuing Washington until his army had ceased to exist as a fighting force, he distributed his regiments throughout New Jersey and settled down to what he thought would be a quiet winter. As was remarked at the time, Howe had possessed a mortgage on the American army but had decided not to foreclose.

Nor was Washington slow to improve the opportunity afforded him by the enemy's inactivity. Realizing that only a sudden and unexpected victory could revive the drooping spirits of the Revolution, he sought eagerly for a weak spot in the enemy's armor and gathered his forces for the attack. And this blow, if delivered at all, must be delivered immediately. At midnight on December 31 was to expire the term of enlistment of most of the Continentals, the only troops upon which he could safely rely. True General Mifflin had been busily engaged in gathering the Pennsylvania militia, over two thousand of whom had already rallied to the defense of their State, but militiamen were poor stuff indeed to oppose to seasoned British regulars.

Fortunately Washington had not far to look for the opportunity he sought. Across the Delaware at Trenton were stationed three regiments of Hessians under Colonel Rall. This officer was so filled with contempt for the Americans that he did not deem it necessary to prepare himself against a surprise. Although his isolated position and the fact that the revolutionists had complete control of the river should have caused

him to be on his guard, he seems to have neglected the most elementary precautions.<sup>3</sup> It was here, then, that Washington decided to deliver his blow.

Sending orders to Cadwalader to cross the Delaware at Bristol, and to Ewing to cross at Trenton Ferry, he himself with 2400 Continentals, the flower of his army, passed over nine miles above the town at McKonkey's Ferry.<sup>4</sup> The weather was frightful, the river was filled with floating ice, a cold northeaster was blowing in the face of the troops. Of the three American detachments, that of Washington was the only one to reach the Jersey shore, and upon it fell the entire task of taking the town.

The army advanced on Trenton in two columns, Sullivan leading one along the river road and Greene the other on the Pennington highway. As the crossing had consumed nine hours, it was four in the morning before the start could be made and when at last the troops reached the town full daylight had appeared. Fortunately the Hessians were unsuspecting and the surprise was complete.

Driving in the outposts which had been stationed on either road about a quarter of a mile from the village, the Americans launched an irresistible attack. Greene's troops, filing past to the north, formed a solid line from the Princeton road to the Assunpinck creek. Stirling drew up his men at the junction of King and Queen, the two principal streets, while Knox posted his artillery so that they could rake every open

<sup>3</sup> Trevelyan, *The American Revolution*, Part II, Vol. II, p. 87.

<sup>4</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 113.

space. On the west Sullivan pushed forward directly through the town toward the bridge over the creek.

The Hessians made but feeble resistance. Rall tried to form them in the streets, but he was helpless before the storm of cannon ball and shot. Huddled together in confusion, unable to bring their artillery into play, the Hessian regiments were forced to yield to the enemy they had so long despised. Several hundred, it is true, made good their escape over the Assunpinck, but Sullivan soon secured command of the bridge and the others were forced to surrender at discretion.

It was a stunning blow. The Hessians lost 100 in killed and wounded, including Colonel Rall himself, who died the next day of his injuries, while among the prisoners were counted 30 regimental officers, 92 sergeants, 29 musicians and 740 privates. Six fine field pieces, 40 horses, 12 drums, 15 standards and 1000 muskets fell into Washington's hands. And all this was accomplished without the loss of a single Continental soldier.<sup>5</sup>

An astonishing victory this, a victory which cast undying credit upon the leader who planned it and carried it to completion in the face of appalling difficulties, upon the brave men who flinched not at the bitter cold or before the fire of the enemy. The effect upon the country was overwhelming. The hated Hessians, who hitherto had been considered such redoubtable warriors, had proved after all to be made of rather poor stuff; the long string of American defeats had been brought to an end; Washington had shown

<sup>5</sup> Trevelyan, *The American Revolution*, Part II, Vol. II, p. 112.

himself a truly brilliant leader well fitted for the difficult task of bringing eventual victory to the revolutionary cause. And as there was dismay, even panic, among the enemy, everywhere the patriots began to take renewed hope.

Despite the completeness of his victory, Washington felt that it would be unwise to pursue it further at this time. His force was still greatly inferior to the enemy, a broad ice-choked river was in his rear, a concentration and advance of the British would place him in imminent peril.<sup>6</sup> So, having secured his prisoners and his booty, he led his weary men back along the road to McKonkey's Ferry, where, with no little trouble they succeeded in recrossing with safety.

In the meanwhile General Cadwalader, hearing firing from the direction of Trenton and suspecting that Washington was in action there, made ready to go to his assistance. Later in the day he received positive word from General Ewing that the Continentals were on the Jersey shore and engaged with the Hessians.<sup>7</sup> He therefore set his men in motion on the morning of the 27th, and succeeded, after some hours of struggling against the ice floes, in crossing the river with his entire command. No sooner had he completed this movement, however, than he was thrown into a state of great perplexity by the news of Washington's retreat. Feeling that an unsupported advance upon von Donop's Hessian troops would be

<sup>6</sup> Washington to Congress, Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 219.

<sup>7</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 239.

hazardous, and yet not wishing to discourage his men by returning to Pennsylvania, he decided to retire down the river to Burlington, there to await developments.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time the British divisions on the Delaware south of Trenton felt themselves to be in great peril because of Washington's victory. In fact had Cadwalader and Ewing not been balked in their first efforts, this entire force would probably have been captured. Not knowing what to expect, and fully conscious of the danger, von Donop retired at once to Allentown where he received orders to hasten on to Princeton. When Cadwalader became aware that the Hessians were retreating he sent out a small party to harrass them, and with his main force advanced first to Bordentown and then to Crosswicks. Here he was joined by 1500 new recruits under General Mifflin, who had crossed on the 27th, 28th and 29th, and was now able to muster some 3000 men.

Although Washington was fully conscious of the danger of an attack in force by the British regulars, he was reluctant to order the militiamen to return. Cadwalader had written him on the 27th, advising him to bring over the Continentals again for a supreme attempt to regain central New Jersey. The enemy were in great panic, he said, and a vigorous pursuit might accomplish much in restoring confidence in the cause and bringing recruits to the army. Washington knew that the Revolution was still at a low ebb

<sup>8</sup> Cadwalader to Washington, Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 241.

and that it was necessary to take desperate chances. How long he could hold together the militia none could tell, and the term of enlistment for most of his Continentals was about to expire. None better than he realized the danger of placing the river in his rear, or of pitting raw recruits against a superior force of regulars, but he felt that he was forced to strike while he still had an army to strike with. He therefore crossed once more into New Jersey, and concentrating his own command at Trenton, ordered Cadwalader and Mifflin to join him there.

One pressing concern was soon relieved by the re-enlistment of most of his veteran troops. This they were persuaded to do only at the earnest solicitations of Washington himself, General Knox, General Mifflin and a number of other officers. The address of Lieutenant-Colonel Henshaw to his Massachusetts regiment is typical of them all. "At present this is our business, let us not forsake it," he said. "It is you and I, brave boys, who are banded together in one common cause. We scorn the thought of flying from it." The appeal to their patriotism was irresistible. Some 1400 of the Continentals poised their firelocks as a sign that they agreed to remain, and a part at least of the army was held together for the all-important work ahead.

The news of the capture of the Hessians at Trenton came like a clap of thunder upon the British headquarters in New York. The rebel forces had received such punishment, it was thought, that nothing further was to be feared from them. And had not General

Howe officially declared the campaign ended for the winter? Now Washington's rabble had suddenly resumed the offensive, and had won a decisive victory which might have far-reaching consequences.

Howe decided to mass his troops at once for an attack. Leaving only 600 men to guard the important stores at Brunswick, he dispatched General Grant to Princeton with all the forces immediately available. Cornwallis, who was on the point of sailing for England to visit his family, hastily returned to his command, and, on Jan. 1, joined Grant with the flower of the British army. In all he had at his disposal, ready to hurl themselves upon Washington's motley assemblage of 5000 Continentals and militia, 8000 troops the equal of any in the world. Taking with him some 5500 men, Cornwallis left Princeton on the morning of January 2, to attack the Americans and drive them into the river.<sup>9</sup> At Princeton itself he left the Fourth brigade, consisting of three fine regiments of infantry and some light horse under the command of Colonel Charles Mawhood, with orders to follow on after him the next day. At Maidenhead he posted the Second brigade.

General Washington was soon apprised of this formidable movement. He was always well served with scouting parties and daring spies, and the country people often came in to inform him of the whereabouts of the enemy, of their numbers and their fortifications. On this particular occasion he had sent forward Colonel Joseph Reed with twelve men to reconnoitre in

<sup>9</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 248.



the vicinity of Princeton and to determine if possible General Howe's intentions. This party found the British outposts so strongly guarded that they could not approach close to the village, but on their way back to Trenton they surprised and captured a detachment of twelve men who were on a foraging expedition. From these prisoners Washington learned that Cornwallis was advancing southward with a formidable force and with all possible rapidity.<sup>10</sup>

The American leader realized that he must now prepare for the worst. It was too late to retreat. Had he attempted to cross the river, which was still swollen and filled with ice, Cornwallis would have been upon him before the operation could be completed; to retire into south Jersey would have placed his men in a *cul de sac*. Apparently there was nothing to do save stand his ground and hope that a stubborn resistance and his own military acumen might yet save the day.

To the south of Trenton there was a creek, the Assunpinck, which had its source in the high ground between Maidenhead and Princeton, and flowing in a southwesterly direction, emptied into the Delaware. Behind this stream Washington posted his army and made ready to meet the shock of the enemy's attack.<sup>11</sup> General St. Clair was sent to the extreme right to guard the fords higher up the stream,<sup>12</sup> Cadwalader's militia were placed in the center north of what was known as Pond Run,<sup>13</sup> while to Hitchcock's veteran

<sup>10</sup> Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, p. 133.

<sup>11</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 256.

<sup>12</sup> Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, p. 137.

<sup>13</sup> Wilkinson, *Diagrams and Plans*, Nos. 3, 4, and 5.



New England brigade was assigned the important task of holding the bridge at the foot of Queen street.<sup>14</sup>

At the same time Washington threw out on the Princeton road a strong detachment under Brigadier-General de Fermoy to meet the enemy and to delay them as much as possible. This force included Hand's Pennsylvania riflemen, Colonel Hausegger's German battalion, Colonel Charles Scott's Virginia Continentals and a battery under Captain Thomas Forrest.<sup>15</sup> The advance guard took post behind a small stream known as Five Mile Run and there awaited the enemy. At the first attack, which occurred at 10 A.M., they began to retire slowly according to orders, contesting every mile and inflicting some loss upon the British.<sup>16</sup>

At the Shabbakong creek, a little stream emptying into the Assunpinck some two miles north of Trenton, a determined stand was made. At the time the south bank was lined with a thick wood through the center of which ran the road to the town, while on the north bank was a wide expanse of open fields. Hand here took position in the woods to the right of the highway, posted Captain Henry Miller on the left, and quietly awaited the approach of the enemy. When the advance guard had reached the edge of the wood the riflemen opened upon them with so deadly a fire that they fell back in disorder. Not knowing how strong was the force which confronted them, the British now felt it necessary to prepare for a regular battle, to

<sup>14</sup> Haven, *Thirty Days in New Jersey*, p. 38.

<sup>15</sup> Haven, *Thirty Days in New Jersey*, p. 29.

<sup>16</sup> Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, p. 136.

form their men in solid line and to bring up the artillery. Then, after the guns had scoured the woods for half an hour, they advanced through the creek and swept over the American positions. But to their chagrin they found them no longer occupied, for Hand and Miller were already well on their way to Trenton. This little affair cost Cornwallis two precious hours, hours which made possible later the escape of Washington's army and the brilliant victory the next day at Princeton.<sup>17</sup>

The British were again held up a mile from the town at a small ravine which ran across the road at right angles and descended toward the Assunpinck. Here the Virginia troops, under Colonel Charles Scott, Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Lawson and Major Richard Parker, with Forrest's battery were drawn up in battle array, and Cornwallis had no alternative save to dislodge them before approaching the main American positions on the Assunpinck. As the British column came in sight across the gully, Forrest opened upon them and an artillery duel of considerable violence ensued which lasted some twenty minutes. The British then formed in dense order, and pressing forward resolutely in the face of a destructive fire, at last forced the Americans to retire.<sup>18</sup>

As they fell back down Queen street, they found Hitchcock's brigade advancing to cover their retreat. The New Englanders opened their ranks to let the weary Virginians pass through on their way back to

<sup>17</sup> Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, p. 137.

<sup>18</sup> Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, pp. 137-138.

the Assunpinck bridge, and then closed them again into a close and compact column. Having accomplished this manoeuvre successfully, they themselves retired slowly and in good order. The British threw out parties to their right which fired upon them from every opening between the houses, and as the Americans neared the creek they rushed for the bridge in order to cut off their only means of retreat. But the batteries on the south bank opened a murderous fire upon them at close range and they were compelled to retire. Thereupon Hitchcock's men marched over the bridge in safety and took position in a meadow to the left.<sup>19</sup>

Had Cornwallis now brought up his full force to hurl them at the American army, it is more than probable that he would have won a complete and crushing victory. The Assunpinck offered no serious obstacle, he enjoyed the advantage not only of superior numbers, but of pitting seasoned regulars against troops of whom two thirds were rank amateurs at the game of war. By feinting against Washington's flanks to hold the attention of the Continentals, and by launching a determined attack on Cadwalader's militiamen in the center, he might easily have cut the army in two and destroyed each part in detail.

But Cornwallis did not attack. His men had been marching and fighting all day and were now greatly fatigued. He had the enemy safe, he thought, and there was no reason why he should not wait until the morning for the attack, after his men had been re-

<sup>19</sup> Haven, *Thirty Days in New Jersey*, pp. 37-38.

freshed with a good night's rest.<sup>20</sup> General Grant and others acquiesced in this decision, but Sir William Erskine, it is said, argued strongly against delay. "My Lord," he said, "if you trust those people to-night, you will see nothing of them in the morning."<sup>21</sup> But Cornwallis, heedless of this warning, posted his men on the high ground north of the city, lit his watch fires, and after putting all in readiness for the morrow's battle, retired to rest.

On the other bank of the Assunpinck there was little sleep. Thankful for the respite which Cornwallis had given him, Washington called a council of war to decide upon the course of action to be pursued.<sup>22</sup> For the army to retain its present position in the hope of beating off the morrow's attack was to risk the entire Revolutionary cause upon a very hazardous chance; to retire along the left bank of the Delaware would lead only to the ocean and eventual surrender. The only hope of escape lay in marching around the British left flank and striking for the Jersey highlands.

Moreover, this course had certain other obvious advantages. At Brunswick were the accumulated stores of the enemy guarded only by a few hundred men. Could this place be captured, Washington would secure not only the clothing and food and arms which his men were so greatly in need of, but enough hard cash to insure their pay for some time to come. Moreover, he was aware of the presence at Princeton of

<sup>20</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 268.

<sup>21</sup> Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, p. 139.

<sup>22</sup> Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, pp. 139-140.

Mawhood with the Fourth brigade. By a rapid march, this force might be taken by surprise and destroyed before the main army could come up to its assistance. It was therefore decided, while leaving fires burning to deceive Cornwallis, to steal away from the Assunpinck, make a detour along a back road to Princeton, overwhelm Mawhood and then march on to Brunswick.<sup>23</sup>

As to the origin of this manoeuvre there has been some controversy. General St. Clair afterwards claimed that the suggestion was his, and in this he is borne out by his aide, General Wilkinson.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand the belief was general both at the time and afterward that the flanking movement was conceived in its entirety by Washington himself, and that it was he who laid it before the council of war.<sup>25</sup> Whatever may be the merits of this dispute, Washington, as Commander-in-chief deserves and has received full credit for this bit of strategy, generally conceded to be the most brilliant of the war.

No sooner had the plan of operations been decided upon than preparations were begun for the march. Fires, replenished with rails from nearby fences, were kindled on the high ground to deceive the enemy; men were set to work near the bridge throwing up earthworks as though in anticipation of a battle; the guards were doubled and kept pacing to and fro until morn-

<sup>23</sup> Washington to the President of Congress, Ford, *The Writings of George Washington*, Vol. V, p. 148.

<sup>24</sup> Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, p. 140.

<sup>25</sup> *The Magazine of American History*, Vol. VIII, Part II, pp. 550-554.

ing. In short nothing was neglected to conceal Washington's real design. Orders were given in a low voice and the rims of the wheels of the gun carriages were wrapped in old cloths that no sound might betray them to the British.<sup>26</sup>

It has usually been taken for granted that the enemy were completely deceived by these measures, and that no report came to Cornwallis of any suspicious activity in the American camp. Captain Hall denies this. "Although this movement of the enemy was masked under the veil of night," he says, "and with all possible secrecy, yet it did not pass quite undiscovered—the sentries, who were advanced, heard the rattling of carriages, and the patrols, in going their rounds, made their reports of an uncommon hurry in the enemy's camp, that indicated they were in motion, which was visible also at times through the glimmering of their fires."<sup>27</sup> If this statement be true Cornwallis must have given little credence to the reports of his sentinels, for he remained motionless during the night, and was not aware that the prey had escaped him until the dawn of morning revealed the empty positions across the Assunpinck. He had permitted himself to be outwitted and outgeneraled.

For several days the weather had been quite mild, and all the roads were heavy and most unsuited for the passage of wagons and artillery. During the night, however, a northwest breeze sprang up, bring-

<sup>26</sup> Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, p. 140; Haven, *Thirty Days in New Jersey*, p. 51.

<sup>27</sup> Hall, *Civil War in America*, p. 258.

ing with it a sharp drop in the temperature, and causing the ground to freeze.<sup>28</sup> Had it not been for this fortunate occurrence it is improbable that Washington could have carried out successfully his daring night march. As it was, the task was most difficult. The road was in places little more than a path cut through the woods, and stumps from two to five inches high which had been left standing, greatly impeded both the men and the field pieces. "We moved slow on account of the artillery," says John Howland, of Hitchcock's brigade, "frequently coming to a halt, or stand still, and when ordered forward again, one, two, or three men in each platoon, would stand, with their arms supported, fast asleep; a platoon next in the rear advancing on them, they, in walking, or attempting to move, would strike a stub and fall."<sup>29</sup>

The army followed the old Sandtown road, which was nearly identical for some distance with the present Hamilton avenue. They did not pass through Sandtown itself, however, but took a cross-road, long since obliterated, which led them to the west of the village. Emerging again upon the main road, the army crossed Muddy Run and passed on through a large tract of land called "The Barrens." West of this the way led by the Bear Swamp and into the Quaker road, a highway used by the Friends in going from Crosswicks to the Stony Brook Meeting House. Crossing the Assunpinck at the Quaker bridge and Stony Brook at the

<sup>28</sup> Historical Documents, Journal of Sergeant William Young; Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, p. 140.

<sup>29</sup> Haven, *Thirty Days in New Jersey*, p. 52.



lower bridge, the army approached Princeton just as the sun was rising.<sup>30</sup>

For a proper understanding of the events which followed it is necessary to determine with some degree of accuracy the order of the divisions on this weary march from Trenton. Mercer's advance, the movements of Mawhood, Sullivan's position, almost every circumstance of that fateful January morning become hazy and inexplicable unless we know who led the van of Washington's army, what divisions followed, what brought up the rear. On the other hand when once this point is settled, the rapidly following succession of events fit naturally into their proper places.

Unfortunately there is great divergence of testimony in regard to this matter. Sergeant R., who was with Mercer in the fight at the William Clark orchard and who has left a vivid description of that tragic event, declares that his regiment led the van.<sup>31</sup> And this has been the accepted view of most historians of the battle. It would seem the part of prudence for Washington, in dispatching a detachment for the task of breaking down the bridge over Stony Brook at Worth's Mill, to select the one which led the column. As the purpose of this movement was in part to cut off the retreat of the regiments at Princeton, it behooved him to waste no time, for he was already behind schedule and his prey might easily escape him. It is this supposition, no doubt, which has been chiefly instrumental in fixing the popular belief that it was

<sup>30</sup> Stryker, pp. 275-276; Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, p. 141.

<sup>31</sup> *Historical Documents, Account of Sergeant R.*, p. 5.



Mercer who led the march on the morning of January 3. Of first hand evidence there seems to be little save the statement of Sergeant R.

Opposed to this we have the testimony of General Wilkinson that Lieutenant-Colonel Isaac Sherman led the army with the 26th regiment of Continental infantry, closely followed by the brigade of General Arthur St. Clair. "Which placed me," he adds, "at the head of the column with General Washington."<sup>32</sup>

This statement is most convincing, if indeed not final. Sergeant R. was but one of several thousand men trudging along in the dark over the frozen road. He had no definite means of knowing whether his own detachment led the van or whether there were other troops ahead. But Wilkinson, who was aide to General St. Clair, in addition to his own personal observation, must have known from the principal officers themselves the location of the various divisions. Had Mercer preceded him in the line of march he would have been aware of it, and would have recorded it in his Memoirs.

Further weight is added to this view by a study of the various positions assigned the different detachments on the day and evening of the second along the Assunpinck. Here again we have recourse to Wilkinson who states positively that St. Clair was posted on the extreme right with two pieces of artillery under Captain Winthrop Sargent, defending the fords over the creek.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Wilkinson, Memoirs, p. 141.

<sup>33</sup> Wilkinson, Memoirs, Vol. I, p. 137.

It is true that Colonel Haslet, in a letter to Caesar Rodney written on the evening of the second, asserts that Mercer's brigade had been stationed about two miles up the creek, but he adds that after sunset, when the British were attacking the bridge in force, "the Light troops were ordered to fly to the support of that important post." That Mercer's men did not return to their former position is shown by Haslet's further statement that, after the action at the bridge, the army retired to the woods "where they camped." There is then excellent reason for believing that the light brigade was not upon the extreme right when the order was sent out to begin the march on Princeton.

Now it seems quite certain that when the troops stole away the order of the detachments in the line was maintained without change. The regiments on the right must have led the advance, those on the left must have brought up the rear. The success of the daring manoeuvre depended upon the secrecy and quickness with which it was executed. For Washington to have shifted the regiments about either while facing the enemy or upon the narrow country road during the march would have been imprudent in the extreme.

It would seem, then, that Mercer did not lead the advance, but that it was Sherman, closely followed by St. Clair, who headed the column. Yet Mercer's brigade undoubtedly occupied a place well to the fore, and it is probable that it followed upon the heels of St. Clair's men. Had this not been the case it could not have been within striking distance of Mawhood when at last it turned aside to break down the bridge at Worth's Mill.

After Mercer came the unwieldy mass of the militia under the command of the brave Cadwalader. Their position is made practically certain by the fact that it was upon them that Washington was forced to rely when Mercer's broken regiments fled from the William Clark orchard before the superior numbers of the British.<sup>34</sup>

In the rear was Hitchcock's brigade. This we know because these veteran New England troops at the Assunpinck had been stationed at the extreme left. John Howland, a member of the brigade declares that he himself heard Washington, after the sharp conflict at the bridge over the creek, direct Colonel Hitchcock to occupy a meadow lying between the road and the Delaware river.<sup>35</sup> If further evidence is needed, it is found in the fact that the brigade, when the clash with Mawhood had begun, was so long in coming up to take its part in the battle. All accounts agree that as these troops were largely instrumental in saving the day, so were they the last to reach the scene of conflict.

When Washington decided to slip around Cornwallis' left flank to surprise the three regiments at Princeton, he was fully apprised of the enemy's positions at the village, and of the best way of attacking them. Several days previously, when General Cadwalader was at Crosswicks, an American spy who had just left the place came to him with exact information, not only as to the approaches, but the numbers of the enemy, the character and location of their batteries.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Stryker, *The Battle of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 447.

<sup>35</sup> Haven, *Thirty Days in New Jersey*, p. 38.

<sup>36</sup> Cadwalader to Washington, Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 434.

From the account given by this man, reinforced no doubt from other sources of information, Cadwalader drew a map of Princeton and the roads immediately around it. Fortunately this map, which is of such great interest to the historian, has been preserved and was recently unearthed from the Library of Congress by the late General Alfred A. Woodhull. It may be assumed that Cadwalader brought the map to Washington and that at the midnight conference on the banks of the Assunpinck, the General and his officers pored over it in order to determine their best plan of attack. Upon it is shown an old road, long since obliterated, leading from the Thomas Clark farm near the Quaker Meeting House to the neighborhood of Baldwin's farm, the present Prospect. "This road leads to the back part of Prince Town," Cadwalader wrote, "which may be entered anywhere on this side, the country cleared . . . for about two miles . . . few fences."

We must suppose, then, that Washington, in planning the flank movement and the long night march to Princeton, had decided in advance just how the approach to the village was to be made. He would lead his men to the Stony Brook by way of Sandtown and then move over the back road indicated on the map, avoiding the enemy's main defences, and descend unexpectedly on their rear. Thus it becomes a matter of importance to locate the course of the road. Otherwise we cannot understand the movements of the troops, for it was here that most of Washington's men were drawn out when the clash between Mercer and Mawhood began.

The Cadwalader map indicates that the road branched off from the main route not far from the Thomas Clark farm, following from that point to Princeton a northeasterly course roughly paralleling the Post Road. This we may assume to be in the main correct. Fortunately, however, it is not the only evidence available. General Wilkinson, who went over the battle field some years later not only to confirm his own impressions of the day's events but to examine the character of the ground and to question old inhabitants, says that the army wheeled to the right into the back road, turned the southeast corner of a wood, and marched directly toward Princeton. The route from the wood onward he indicates upon his map by a straight line.<sup>37</sup>

It seems certain, then, that the road branched out of the main highway at a point several hundred yards south of the Meeting House, that it skirted the wood, which is still in existence, to a point near the Meeting House itself. From there it must have run approximately in a straight line northeast, near the Thomas Clark house and back of the hill upon which it stands, past the Olden house on what is now Olden Lane, back of Mercer Heights and on to the rear of Prospect. That both the Thomas Clark residence and the Olden residence face south adds weight to these conclusions, and makes the location of the route almost a certainty.

It was shortly before sunrise that the head of the American column approached the Meeting House and

<sup>37</sup> Wilkinson, *Diagrams and Plans*, Nos. 3, 4, and 5; *Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 141.

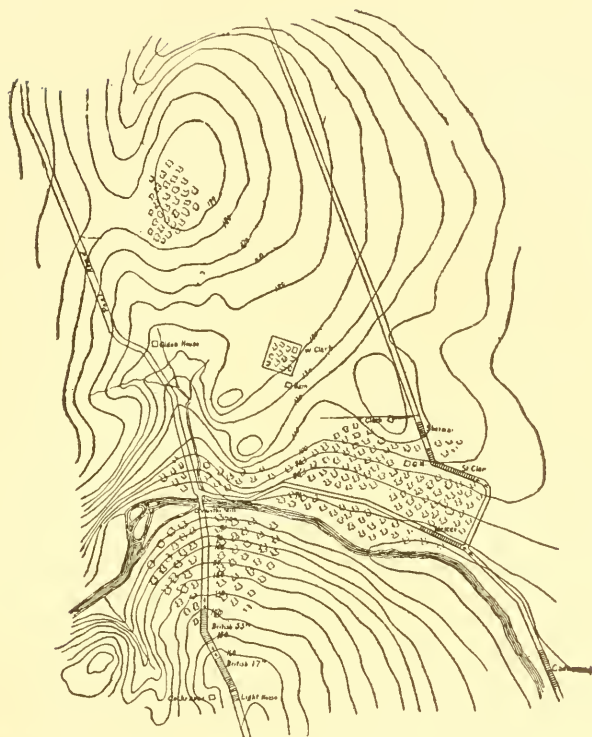
Sullivan's men with Sherman in the lead, turned into the back road.<sup>38</sup> No sooner had they passed, than Mercer's brigade, leaving the main body of the army, set out along the road beside the creek for Worth's Mill. (See Map 1.)

The reasons for this move are obvious. It will be remembered that Washington in his turning movement designed not only to elude the superior forces of Lord Cornwallis at Trenton, but to cut off the regiments at Princeton and to capture the stores at Brunswick. For all purposes, then, it was important that the Post Road bridge over Stony Brook should be destroyed. Not only would this prevent the retreat of the three isolated regiments, but it would delay Cornwallis' pursuit and give time for Washington to strike a telling blow by securing the enemy's all-important base.

As to what troops Mercer took with him on this mission there has been some confusion. One witness states that they were the old Virginia brigade formerly led by Lord Stirling. If this is correct the regiments which encountered Mawhood's veterans at the orchard fence were the First Virginia Continental infantry, the Delaware regiment of Continental infantry, the Third Virginia Continental infantry and the First Pennsylvania volunteer rifles.<sup>39</sup> It seems certain, however, that this brigade had a short while before been broken up, parts being assigned to Mercer and parts to other commanders. This is borne out by Wilkinson who says that Mercer's detachment consisted of

<sup>38</sup> Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 141.

<sup>39</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 351.



MAP I. Shows position of British and American troops at moment of mutual discovery. The head of Sullivan's division has passed the Quaker Meeting House (Q.M.) while Mercer has just started for Worth's Mill. Mawhood, with the Light Horse, and the 55th and 17th infantry is ascending the hill south of Worth's Mill on his way to Maidenhead.

the fragments of Smallwood's Maryland regiment commanded by Captain Stone, the First Virginia regiment commanded by Captain Fleming, two field pieces under Captain Neal and probably other corps which he could not recollect.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 141.



Substantiation of this statement is found in the fact that both Fleming and Neal were killed, the latter certainly in the fight at the orchard. Of the other detachments alluded to, the Delaware regiment of Continentals certainly was one, for it too lost its commander, the gallant Colonel John Haslet.<sup>41</sup> That any parts of the Third Virginia Continental infantry or of the First Pennsylvania riflemen were with Mercer seems unlikely, as no mention is made of their presence in any of the accounts of the battle.

The troops at Princeton under the command of Colonel Charles Mawhood consisted of the 17th, the 55th and 40th regiments of infantry, fifty light horse and some stragglers who were on their way to their respective commands. Mawhood had orders to leave the 40th to guard the town and with the rest of the force to proceed to Maidenhead.<sup>42</sup>

At five o'clock on the morning of the third he started off from Princeton, taking the obvious route over the Post Road.<sup>43</sup> He had crossed the bridge over Stony Brook at the mill, and had reached the Cochrane place on the hill beyond, when some members of the light horse, who were leading the column, looking to the east, caught sight of Washington's troops moving over the road back to Princeton.<sup>44</sup> (See Map 1.) It has

<sup>41</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 282.

<sup>42</sup> Hall, *Civil War in America*, p. 258. Wilkinson thought that only the 17th left for Maidenhead, but in this he was certainly mistaken.

<sup>43</sup> Hall, *Civil War in America*, p. 259; Olden, *A Brief Narrative*, p. 32.

<sup>44</sup> Hall, *Civil War in America*, p. 259.



often been supposed that it was Mercer's force which Mawhood saw from the hill, but apparently such was not the case. Not only does Hall's statement that the Americans were moving in a line parallel with the Post Road, put the matter beyond reasonable doubt, but the nature of the ground is such that one stationed near the Cochrane residence would have had great difficulty in seeing down into the ravine. Thus Mawhood imagined that he had to deal, not with the near approach of troops upon his rear, but only with the advance of the Americans on the town. Hall says, "Colonel Mawhood, who on the first intelligence rode forward to reconnoitre, presently perceived that it was part of the rebel army making for Prince Town."<sup>45</sup>

The British commander paused to consider what this force could be, what were its objects, and what should be his own course of action. It might be a small detachment, defeated by Cornwallis and now seeking safety in flight. How many men it contained he had no means of ascertaining, for although the morning was clear and cold so that objects at a considerable distance could be seen distinctly, the Americans were in part hidden by the woods and irregularities in the topography.

Had Mawhood had only his own safety to consider his decision would have been arrived at without delay. The brook was in his rear, he was well on his way to Maidenhead, all that he needed to do was to break down the bridge at the mill and proceed unmolested. But he realized that this course of action would not

<sup>45</sup> Hall, *Civil War in America*, p. 259.

only leave the 40th regiment at the mercy of the enemy, but also the baggage of the Fourth brigade which was on its way to Princeton, and the vast stores collected at Brunswick. A heavy blow would certainly be struck at British prestige unless he acted with promptness and decision. These considerations, together with the improbability that he would have to encounter a greatly superior body of troops, decided him to hasten back to oppose them.<sup>46</sup>

A brief survey of the terrain which stretched out under his view convinced him that he might easily head off the enemy by taking possession of the one commanding hill near which they must pass before entering the town. This unquestionably was the high ground to the south of the village now known as Mercer Heights. Hall says Mawhood advanced "to gain some heights which the rebels were making for in their way to the town."<sup>47</sup> The supposition that from the first he had selected the ground near the William Clark house as the place of battle is not worthy of a moment's consideration. There is no commanding position there, it was not in the line of Washington's march, and it would have been difficult for the British to reach it ahead of Sherman and St. Clair, had there been any reason for those commanders to march in that direction. Clearly the movement on the Clark orchard was not a part of Mawhood's original plans, and came only to meet the unexpected emergency occasioned by the discovery later of the proximity of Mercer's brigade.

<sup>46</sup> Hall, *Civil War in America*, pp. 259-260.

<sup>47</sup> Hall, *Civil War in America*, p. 260.

At the moment when they were first perceived by the British, Sherman's troops must have been several hundred yards nearer Mercer Heights than Mawhood, but the latter was upon a far better road, and by hastening might well be first upon the ground. The British commander, therefore, sent word post-haste to the 40th regiment to march out from the village to join him, and, giving the order to his command to face about, hastened down the hill, over the bridge and back up the Post Road.<sup>48</sup>

In the meanwhile Mercer was proceeding along the creek road on his way to break down the bridge. At the moment when the British turned back, he had gone but a short distance, and was doubtless a full 800 yards from Worth's Mill. A minute or two later the British must have been rushing over the bridge, and before Mercer's men could have arrived on the spot, they were over and well on their way up the hill.

In some accounts of the battle the impression is given that Mercer and Mawhood came upon each other in the ravine at the mill, and that they then rushed to get possession of the high ground nearby. Not only is this supposition inconsistent with other events preceding and following Mercer's march, but to entertain it we must deny to both commanders the most rudimentary military acumen. Had Mawhood encountered Mercer at this point, his first concern would have been for the bridge. However necessary it would have seemed to secure possession of the hill on

<sup>48</sup> Hall, *Civil War in America*, p. 260.

his right, he could not leave the Americans in possession of his only means of retreat. Mercer, on the other hand, had he gotten to the bridge ahead of the British or even while they were clattering over it on their return march, would certainly have opened fire on them from the creek road. By placing Neal's two guns at the turn of the road, and by throwing out supporting infantry on the declivity above, he would have made the crossing a matter of extreme difficulty, and might actually have cut the British column in two. We have every reason to assume then, as Wilkinson says, that Mercer had no suspicion of the proximity of Mawhood's corps, until it had recrossed Stony Brook.

Just when and how Mercer learned that the British were on the Post Road cannot definitely be determined. Wilkinson states that at the moment when the head of the American column had reached a point near the Quaker Meeting House, he turned his eyes westward and discovered the enemy "by the reflection of their arms against the rising sun, ascending the hill in the wood near Cochrane's." (See Map. 1.) "Perceiving Colonel R. Harrison, the General's secretary, near me," he adds, "I called him, and was about to shew him the spectacle which had caught my eyes, when it suddenly disappeared, and two horsemen leaped a fence . . . reconnoitred us a minute or two, and returned to the road, soon after which we observed the line come to the right about and descend the hill in quick time."<sup>49</sup>

Thus it is certain that Washington was apprized almost immediately of the presence of the British and

<sup>49</sup> Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 142.

of their retreat toward Princeton. This being the case, he would certainly hasten word to Mercer that the enemy were at hand, with orders as to his next move. Nor is it improbable that this message reached him before he himself had seen Mawhood's men, and that it was in conformity with Washington's orders that he turned to the right and left the creek road.

On the other hand it seems equally possible that Mercer knew of Mawhood's proximity before any message had reached him. If we suppose that scouts were in advance of his column, which would have been no more than common prudence, they would have come to a turn in the road bringing the bridge into view before the British had gotten across.

At all events, Mercer now decided to leave the road. He seems to have felt that he must head off the British retreat, and to accomplish this purpose the obvious course of action was to lead his column to the top of a hill to the right which rose some 60 feet above the level of the creek. Here he would be in a position to observe the movements of the enemy and perhaps to launch an attack upon them. This hill, which is situated upon the estate of Mrs. M. Taylor Pyne between the Presbyterian chapel and the barn, rises abruptly above the road, and for Mercer to gain its summit with his two field pieces must have consumed several vitally important minutes.

That the brigade did ascend this declivity and did not, as is usually supposed, march directly toward the William Clark orchard, rests chiefly upon the testimony of Sergeant R., who was present and whose

story of the battle which ensued has proved so very trustworthy. "About sunrise of the 3d January 1777," he says, "reaching the summit of a hill near Princeton, we observed a light horseman looking towards us, as we view an object when the sun shines in our face."<sup>50</sup> Now there was but one hill near at hand, and unless we assume that the Sergeant's memory failed him, the conclusion is unescapable that it was here that Mercer led his men.

An examination of the ground tends to confirm the story of the lone horseman. As Mawhood hastened along the Post Road in the race for Mercer Heights, he must have sent out scouts to the right to look beyond the ridge which separated him from the back road, to observe Washington's army and to report its progress toward Princeton. These scouts to attain a position favorable to reconnoitering, would probably have been at or near the William Clark orchard. Here they would have been to the east of Mercer, between him and the rising sun, and it seems certain that it was one of these that Sergeant R. saw.

Mercer now realized the futility of further attempts to head off the British. If it is true that Mawhood had gotten back over the bridge before his presence was known to Mercer, and as we have seen this seems almost certain, he would now have been well advanced on his march towards Mercer Heights. For the Americans to descend the north side of the hill, cross the little rivulet beyond and follow along behind the

<sup>50</sup>Historical Documents, Princeton University Library, Account of Sergeant R., p. 5.

enemy would have been a useless and dangerous proceeding.

Obviously the only prudent course left open to Mercer was to rejoin the main column as quickly as possible, unless indeed he should retrace his steps and cut down the bridge. To the east, some 500 yards away he could discern Sullivan's division, far ahead of the rest of the army, marching toward Princeton along the back road. In a few more minutes it would reach the slope southeast of the Heights, whither Mawhood was hastening in the attempt to intercept it. Apparently, then, Mercer decided to march to Sullivan's support and so turned his line eastward across the William Clark farm. (See Map 2.)

Mawhood, in the meanwhile, was proceeding along the Post Road, in the hope of heading off the American column. It is supposed by some writers that he left the highway some three hundred yards from the bridge, crossed the little stream to the right over a causeway, and marched at once for the William Clark orchard. There would appear to be little to support this theory. Mawhood was endeavored to reach, not the orchard, but Mercer Heights. He probably was quite unaware at this time of Mercer's proximity, and his movements had no reference to him whatever. Until the brigade emerged over the brow of the hill to the east, he could have seen it from no point on his march back to the town.

It is quite certain then that Mawhood continued upon the Post Road until he came to a decided bend to the left. As this would have led him somewhat out



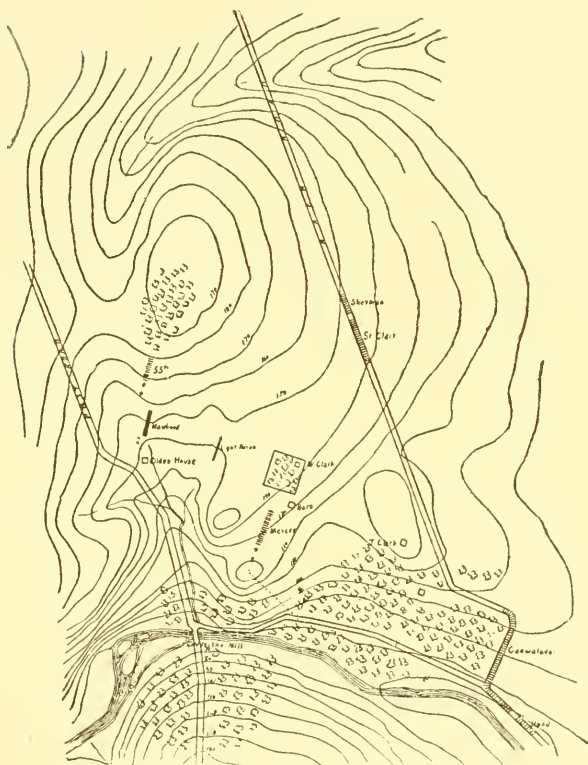
of his way he here struck out across the fields straight for the high ground ahead. If this supposition is correct, his route must have taken him into the estate of Mrs. M. Taylor Pyne at a point several hundred yards south of the present flower garden. Here it was, we must assume, that the scout seen by Sergeant R. came riding up with the announcement that a detachment of American troops were at hand on the right. (See Map 2.)

An interesting confirmation of this conclusion is found in "A Brief Narrative," the so-called Thomas Olden diary. "When as soon as it was well light," says the writer, "we saw the Regulars that was left at Princetown Marching toward Trenton, and in about half a hours time we saw them coming back faster then they went, a Party of them came into our Field, and laid down their Packs and formed at the corner of our Garden about 60 yards from the door and then marched away immediately to the field of Battle which was in William Clarks wheat field and orchard round about his house and how much further to the westward I know not. It was plain within sight of our door at about 400 Yards distance."<sup>51</sup>

Professor V. Lansing Collins has pointed out that the writer of this Narrative could not have been Thomas Olden, as the latter was born in 1735, while the author distinctly gives the date of his own birth as 1691. Yet there can be little doubt that the house from which he witnessed the battle was that of Thomas Olden. The building is still standing, beside the Post

<sup>51</sup> Olden, *A Brief Narrative*, pp. 32-33.





MAP 2. Sullivan's Division has advanced to a position near the present Olden Lane, Cadwalader is rounding the wood near the Meeting House and Hand is still on the Quaker Road. Mercer has attained the summit of the hill overlooking Worth's Mill and is marching eastward to join Sullivan. The British Light Horse are advancing on the W. Clark orchard, followed by Mawhood's infantry and artillery, while the main part of the 55th continues its march to Mercer Heights.

Road, a few yards to the left of the main Drumthwacket entrance. In 1777, however, it stood three hundred yards to the south, at the head of the little

stream which runs beside the road. This point is just about 400 yards from the battle field, which, except for a modern growth of trees, would be plainly visible. In short, the Thomas Olden house exactly fits the picture given by the aged author of the Narrative, and there can be no reasonable doubt that it was there the British learned that Mercer was nearby, proceeding on his way to join Sullivan.

Mawhood was now confronted with a perplexing problem. Should he turn upon Mercer to inflict upon him a telling defeat, or should he keep on his course to intercept Sullivan? On the one hand it would have been most imprudent to leave the 40th to receive unassisted the shock of the American attack, on the other it would seem the part of wisdom to prevent the union of these two detachments and to crush one and then the other. Faced with these alternatives Mawhood decided to send a part of 55th ahead to meet the 40th on its march out from the village, trusting that this force, with the advantage of the ground could well hold its own. With the 17th, a part of the 55th, the 50 light horse and two field pieces, he wheeled sharply to the right to assail Mercer.<sup>52</sup> (See Map 2.)

In this movement, as in every other step of that

<sup>52</sup> The composition of the attacking force is placed beyond doubt by General Howe's official statement of Jan. 8, 1777. "He desires his thanks may be given to the Officers and Soldiers of the 17th Foot, to part of the 55th Regiment and other detachments on their march who on that occasion supported the 17th Regiment and Charged the Enemy with Bayonets in the most spirited manner." Ms. Diary of Thomas Glyn, Princeton University Library.

eventful day, speed was of vital importance. Mawhood, therefore, seems to have sent ahead the horsemen to impede the enemy's march and to hold any advantageous position which might present itself until he could bring up the other detachments. Captain Truwin, of the light horse, discovered Mercer's men as they were about to enter the William Clark orchard on their way to rejoin the main army. This orchard lay directly in their path. The bare trees and the picket fence could offer no serious obstacle to their march, so Mercer had decided to pass through it rather than waste time by making a detour to the right or to the left. Seeing this, the British, while still under cover of the hill and unperceived by Mercer, apparently dismounted and crept up to take post on the north side of the orchard. Here, behind the fence and a ditch which ran in front of it, they opened fire on the unsuspecting Americans.<sup>53</sup>

Although every trace of the old orchard has long since been obliterated, records which have been preserved make it possible to determine its position with a fair degree of exactness. When Wilkinson, some 40 years after the battle, returned to study the ground in relation to the movements of the troops, it was probably still standing. There is every reason, therefore, for accepting the location as given in his atlas, and as described in the text of his *Memoirs*. And though the crudeness of his map, together with the fact that most of the landmarks upon which he relied have since

<sup>53</sup> Historical Documents, Princeton University Library, Account of Sergeant R., p. 5.

been obliterated, render the task more difficult, enough accurate data remains to make it possible to arrive at fairly positive conclusions.

Wilkinson denotes the orchard as roughly square, with the William Clark residence in the southeast corner, and the north fence bisected obliquely by the line of the present turnpike. The position occupied by the British during the main part of the fight, paralleled the fence at a distance of 40 yards, extending from the edge of the turnpike to a knoll some distance to the westward.<sup>54</sup> Since we can locate the position of the residence, which was about 50 yards southeast of Mercer Manor, since the turnpike remains as it was in Wilkinson's day, and since the knoll can be identified, we can fix the boundaries of the orchard with some degree of certainty. The sides of the square must have been from 100 to 125 yards in length, the northeast corner must have been some 90 feet in front of Mercer Manor, the southeast corner 400 feet due east of the battle monument, the southwest corner between the monument and a splendid old tree standing alone near the present entrance to the Owsley field, the northwest corner some 20 yards north of the turnpike. To the south was the barn, while further to the east, on the slope in front of the residence were other outbuildings.<sup>55</sup> Such was the scene of the first part of this famous battle which occupies so important a place

<sup>54</sup> Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 142.

<sup>55</sup> In 1848, when Lossing made a sketch of the battle field, a number of these buildings seem to have been standing. The drawing is reproduced in his *Field Book of the Revolution*, Vol. II, p. 29.

in American history and upon which such vast stakes depended.

So far as I am aware there are only two accounts of the battle at the orchard which were written by eyewitnesses, that of Sergeant R. published in *The Phoenix* of March 24, 1832, at Wellsborough, Pa., and that of Sergeant Joseph White, of Neal's battery.<sup>56</sup> Of these the White Narrative, because so vague and lacking in detail, is of little service to the historian. Sergeant R., on the other hand, while his memory was at fault in some details, has given a logical and invaluable account of the battle, which I see no reason for rejecting. The accepted version of the events at the orchard is based upon the brief and conflicting accounts of Wilkinson, Knox, Hall, Rodney, and Cadwalader, all of whom were far from the scene of conflict and could not speak from personal observation. Their statements are of secondary importance only, and conclusions based upon them must be discarded in so far as they conflict with the more detailed account of Sergeant R.

As we have seen, Mercer was attacked while hastening through the orchard from west to east to join Sullivan's division. He did not, as is usually supposed, come up from the low ground on the south, march north through the orchard and begin the battle at the fence. This conclusion, resting in part on Sergeant R's statement that Mercer came from the direction of the hill overlooking Worth's Mill, gains additional weight from other details of his account. "Soon after

<sup>56</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p 478.

this, as we were descending a hill through an orchard," he says, "a party of the enemy who were entrenched behind a bank and fence, rose and fired on us. Their first shot passed over our heads cutting the limbs of the trees under which we were marching."<sup>57</sup> Had Mercer been going north at the time, he would have been ascending, not descending the slope. "At this moment we were ordered to wheel," continues the Sergeant, and to advance upon the enemy. Had the Americans been marching toward the British, they would have received this fire in their faces, and there would have been no occasion to wheel. In fact, however, the fire poured in upon them from the left, and it became necessary to turn in order to form and charge the enemy.

Although taken by surprise, Mercer acted with coolness and decision. The fire of the British, despite the fact that it was delivered at comparatively close range, seems not to have been very destructive. The Americans wheeled into line, advanced and poured a volley in upon the enemy. The wisdom of this prompt action was soon apparent. Captain Truwin's force was not strong enough to withstand the charge of the Americans and fell back, leaving to Mercer the place of vantage at the fence. "I advanced to the fence on the opposite side of the ditch which the enemy had just left," says Sergeant R., "fell on one knee and loaded my musket with ball and buckshot."

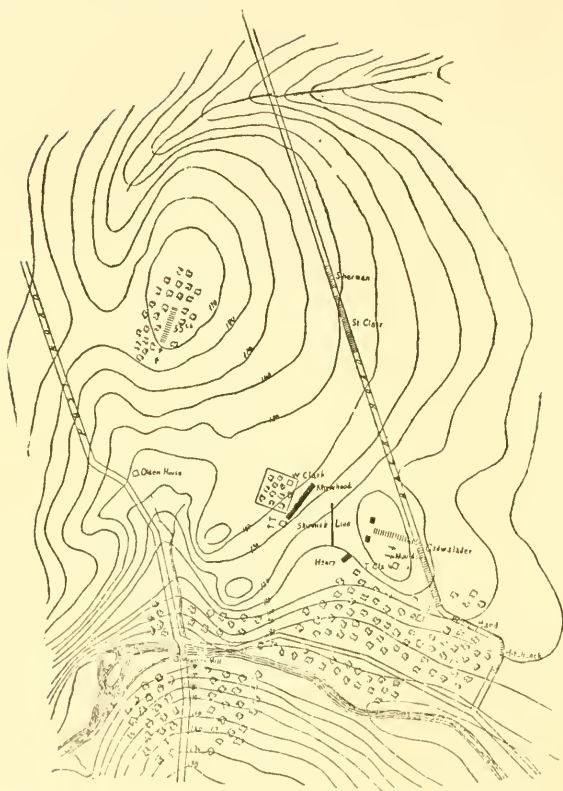
"The British force retreated eight rods to their

<sup>57</sup> Historical Documents, Princeton University Library, Account of Sergeant R., p. 5.

packs, which were laid in a line," where they stood their ground until Mawhood could bring up the main body. "Our fire was most destructive," says Sergeant R., "their ranks grew thin and the victory seemed complete, when the British were reinforced." The enemy's left rested on a large chestnut tree upon the edge of the turnpike, while their right extended toward a small knoll where stood a solitary oak. (See Map 3.) Mawhood placed his two field pieces on the right facing Neal's battery which took post on the American left, just beyond the northwest corner of the orchard. For several minutes after the appearance of the main British force the fighting continued briskly. The lines were so close that the fire upon both sides, especially that of the artillery, must have done considerable execution. Cannister shot at 40 yards, even at that early date, could not long be withstood by practically unprotected troops. The Americans remained firm for a short while, delivering in all three volleys. But being inferior in numbers to the British, and armed with inferior muskets, they soon began to waver. Seeing that his opportunity had come, Mawhood ordered his men to fix bayonets and charge.

"Many of our brave men had fallen," says Sergeant R., "and we were unable to withstand such numbers of fresh troops." Moreover, some were without bayonets and so in no position to contend with the enemy in a hand-to-hand encounter. As the British came rushing up to the fence, they gave way and fled for safety back through the orchard. Many fell trying to get over the southern fence between the William





MAP 3. Shows the encounter at the orchard, with Mercer's men stationed behind the fence and Mawhood forty yards to the north. Sullivan's division is shown stationary on the Back Road and the 55th on Mercer Heights. Cadwalader has passed the Meeting House, while Hand and Hitchcock follow, the latter still on the Quaker Road.

Clark residence and the barn. The fugitives turned their faces, not westward whence they had come, for this would have made it necessary for them to cross



the line of fire, but due south toward the hill where stood the Thomas Clark house. Sergeant R. says that he looked about for the main body of Washington's army, but that they were nowhere to be seen. Whereupon he discharged his musket at the enemy, and ran for a piece of woods at a little distance where he thought he might find shelter.

The American officers made heroic efforts to rally the troops, but in vain. Mercer himself fell mortally wounded. He went into battle on a gray horse, but the animal had been struck in the foreleg and at the time of the retreat he was on foot.<sup>58</sup> While some distance down the slope not far from the Clark barn, still gallantly endeavoring to stay the flight of his men, he was knocked down by a blow from the butt of a musket. Mercer wore a surtout over his uniform and the British soldiers were not at first aware of his rank. They soon discovered that it was a general that they had brought down, however, and in exultation cried out, "Call for quarters, you damn rebel." But Mercer, angered at this insult, would not yield and lunged at them with his sword. Whereupon they bayoneted him repeatedly, and left him for dead.<sup>59</sup>

Colonel Haslet, of the Delaware Continentals, gave his life in the endeavor to stay the tide of defeat. Even after the flight had proceeded beyond the south fence of the orchard, he still tried to rally his men and to form a new line on the slope beyond the out-buildings. Here he was shot through the head and

<sup>58</sup> Joseph Clark, son of William Clark, told Wilkinson that the horse was observed after the action with his leg broken.

<sup>59</sup> Custis, *Private Memoirs of Washington*, p. 181.

fell dying.<sup>60</sup> The gallant Captain Neal also was lost at this point, and with him Captain Fleming, of the First Virginia Continentals.<sup>61</sup> Of all the commanding officers who marched out with Mercer to break down the bridge at the mill, Captain Stone, of the Marylanders, alone survived.

The Americans were forced to relinquish their two field pieces, which the British seized, wheeled into position near the barn and turned upon the fugitives. They also brought up their own artillery, and thus were able to muster four pieces for the new engagement which was at hand.<sup>62</sup> When they had pursued Mercer's men beyond the Clark outhouses, becoming aware of the proximity of fresh American forces, they checked the pursuit, consolidated their line and waited to see how formidable were the reinforcements at hand.

It now becomes necessary to return to the main part of Washington's army in order to understand the events which followed. When Mercer turned into the creek road, Sullivan's division, it will be remembered, had already advanced on the back road to Princeton as far as the Quaker Meeting House. While Mawhood was hastening back from Cochrane's and while Mercer was striking across country in an effort to intercept him, it had continued its march without in-

<sup>60</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 439, *The Journal of Captain Thomas Rodney*.

<sup>61</sup> Stryker, *The Battle of Trenton and Princeton*, pp. 282, 284.

<sup>62</sup> Captain Rodney says the British had eight guns in their position near the Clark outhouses, but this unquestionably is a mistake. Stryker, *The Battle of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 439.

terruption, and at the time of the first clash, had reached a point not far from the Olden residence at Maple Hill farm. This conclusion is arrived at, not only by a comparison of the distances covered by the various detachments, but from Wilkinson's map, on which St. Clair's position is definitely located.

In fact it is possible to determine the exact spot upon which Wilkinson himself was standing during the battle at the orchard. "Although my view of the combatants engaged in this short, sharp, close rencontre was obstructed by a swell in the ground," he says, "the retreat of the Americans by William Clark's house and barn, was under my eyes. . . . I well recollect that the smoke from the discharge of the two lines mingled as it rose, and went up in one beautiful cloud."<sup>63</sup> The only place along the back road from which the Clark buildings could have been seen, but from which the north front of the orchard was not in the line of vision was at the point of intersection with what is now Olden Lane. There it was that St. Clair and his aide, with no little concern, watched Mercer's men retreat before the British bayonets.

Most accounts of the battle leave the reader to imagine that the other divisions of Washington's army followed closely behind St. Clair, and were stretched out along the road in one unbroken line. Since no mention is made of a gap in the column, and since it has usually been assumed that Mercer had preceded and not followed Sullivan's division, one would have the right to assume that the entire stretch of road from

<sup>63</sup> Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 143.

St. Clair's rear to the Thomas Clark house was filled with marching troops. A short survey of the nature of the ground and the events which followed will suffice to show that such could not have been the case. Had the main part of the army occupied the road north of the Meeting House, it would have been in splendid position to advance immediately to the support of Mercer. The moment firing was heard from the orchard the men would have turned face to the left and swept forward in an unbroken line 800 yards in length. Cadwalader, advancing up the depression between the two Clark houses, and the New England veterans over the Thomas Clark hill, would have overwhelmed Mawhood even before the fight in the orchard was ended. But no such advance took place. When Sergeant R. was forced to flee before the British, he "looked about for the main army," but it was not to be seen.

The conclusion, then, is irresistible. The army did not sweep forward because the army was not there. The stretch of road from the Olden farm to the Thomas Clark house was empty, leaving between St. Clair and Cadwalader a great gap of some 1,000 yards. The Pennsylvania militia which constituted the bulk of the army was at that moment rounding the wood near the Meeting House, while, in all probability, the rear guard of Hitchcock's brigade had not yet left the Quaker Road.

The explanation for this gap in the line, which so nearly proved disastrous to the American cause, is to be found in two simple facts. The dispatch of Mer-

cer's brigade toward Worth's Mill accounts for some 200 yards of the distance, a delay in putting the raw militia in readiness for the attack on the town, for the remainder. Captain Rodney, himself an officer in this division, states that "General Mercer's brigade, owing to some delay in arranging Cadwalader's men, had advanced several hundred yards ahead."<sup>64</sup>

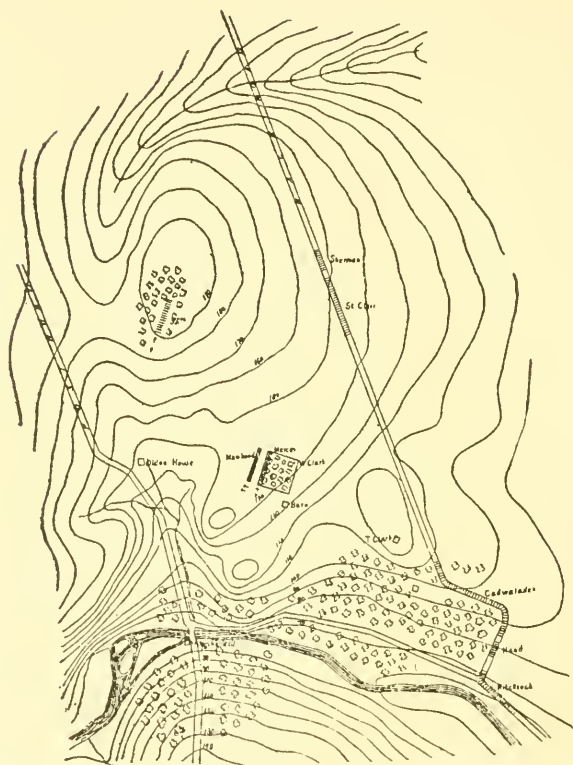
Caught thus at a disadvantage when the British opened so unexpectedly their attack, Washington was forced to bring up post-haste the main body of the army. The militia were ordered by General Greene to form as soon as they reached the Thomas Clark hill.<sup>65</sup> As the head of the column passed over the crest of the slope, they were confronted with a sight which would have shaken the nerve of the steadiest veterans, for Mercer's men were in full flight, heading directly toward them, while behind pressed on the victorious red coats. (See Map 4.)

In the depression between the two Clark houses was a fence, and here the advance line of the British, consisting of about 50 light infantry, halted when Cadwalader's column came into view.<sup>66</sup> Behind them, on the slope in front of the William Clark buildings, was the main body, with the field pieces posted still further in the rear. The light infantry extended themselves for some distance along the fence, and kept up an incessant fire upon the militia above. But when Cadwalader dispatched Captain George Henry with about

<sup>64</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 439.

<sup>65</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 447.

<sup>66</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 447.



MAP 4. Shows Cadwalader's militia marching over the Thomas Clark hill and endeavoring to form in the face of the enemy's fire. Mawhood's main line is formed south of the orchard, with his skirmishes thrown out in front. Captain Henry's men are flanking the skirmish line. Hand and Hitchcock are rounding the wood on the Back Road.

100 men to the left to flank them, while Moulder's battery opened fire at close range, they abandoned their post and retired to the main body.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 447.

In the meanwhile the militia was endeavoring under the most adverse circumstances to get into position. It was unfortunate that Greene had not formed the column behind the hill, so that, when all was in readiness, they might have rushed forward to stay the flight of Mercer's brigade and crush the advancing British. Probably he did not realize that the battle at the orchard had already been lost, and intended to bring his men into action there. At all events, Cadwalader led the head of his column over the crest of the hill, and then, under a shower of grape shot and with the panic stricken remnants of the defeated brigade rushing through them, attempted to arrange the line. Riding bravely in front of the troops, he ordered the detachments to file off, one to the right, the next to the left, and so on alternately. (See Map 4.) Such a manoeuvre would have been difficult even for seasoned veterans; for inexperienced farmers and mechanics and shop keepers who had left their homes but a few weeks previous, it was almost impossible. When about half of the first battalion had been formed, they broke, and falling back upon the advancing column, threw the whole into confusion.<sup>68</sup>

Had it not been for the gallantry of the second company of artillery of Philadelphia Associations, under Captain Joseph Moulder, the day might have been irretrievably lost. This battery consisted of two long 4-pounders, manned by a band of hardy young "along-shoremen, Ship Carpenters, Mast, Block and Sail-

<sup>68</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 447.



makers, Riggers, &c.”<sup>69</sup> As the Pennsylvania militia advanced on the enemy, Moulder took position to the right of the Thomas Clark house, and opened a destructive fire upon the enemy.<sup>70</sup> It was this fire which aided in driving in Mawhood’s skirmish line, and it now kept him from charging upon the broken mass of the infantry and crowning his early successes by the rout of the main part of Washington’s army.

It is stated by Wilkinson that the British, “encouraged by the irresolution of the militia,” attempted with a company of infantry to carry the battery.<sup>71</sup> Unless this refers to the advance of the skirmish line to the fence between the two hills, it must be a mistake. Wilkinson himself was too far away to see what was transpiring at the Thomas Clark farm, and neither Cadwalader nor Rodney, both of whom were present and relate in such detail the succession of events, mentions a charge to carry the guns. Apparently the British at no time advanced beyond the line of the fence.

In the meanwhile General Washington, assisted by Cadwalader and others, was making desperate efforts to bring order out of the confusion. Cadwalader rode around to the left to draw up a new line, joining “one man after another to it,” and “some companies did form and gave a few vollies.” “But the fire was so hot, that, at the sight of the Regular troops (Mercer’s men) running to the rear, the militia broke and

<sup>69</sup> Haven, *Thirty Days in New Jersey*, p. 44.

<sup>70</sup> Haven, *Thirty Days in New Jersey*, p. 45.

<sup>71</sup> Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 143.



the whole brigade broke and most of them retired to a wood about 150 yards in the rear."<sup>72</sup> The British at this juncture dispatched the light horse to their left to flank the American position and take advantage of the confusion, but the artillery was turned upon them and they dispersed immediately.<sup>73</sup>

Captain Rodney says that a field officer was sent to order him to take post on the left of Moulder, so he crossed the enemy's fire from right to left, and took up a position behind some stacks and buildings on the Thomas Clark farm. About thirty of the Philadelphia infantry were under cover of another building a little to the left and further to the rear. Some 150 of Rodney's men came to this post, but it was impossible to hold them, for the enemy's fire was very destructive. Three balls grazed Rodney himself, one passing through the elbow of his overcoat, one carrying away a part of his shoe, another nicking his hat. Yet a number of the party stood firm, and with Moulder's two field pieces, kept up a continuous fire on the enemy.<sup>74</sup> Had Mawhood realized that the eminence was held by this handful of men, he might easily have carried it by a determined charge, but knowing that he was confronted by several thousand troops, and expecting at any moment to see new divisions sweep over the crest of the hill, he held back until the chance was gone. (See Map 4.)

By this time Hitchcock with the Continental troops,

<sup>72</sup> Stryker, *The Battle of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 439.

<sup>73</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 447.

<sup>74</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 440.

the veterans of many a battle, came up from the rear, ready to support the wavering militia. Washington sent them on to the right of the line, around the eastern end of the hill, so that they could envelop the enemy's left flank. Beyond them, with orders to carry the flanking movement still further, was Colonel Edward Hand, with his regiment of Pennsylvania riflemen.<sup>75</sup> (See Map 5.) Washington had also succeeded in rallying some of the fugitives from Cadwalader's division and Mercer's brigade, and a new line was formed about 100 yards in the rear, probably out of range of fire behind the hill.<sup>76</sup> Sergeant R. relates that the General rode up to a party which was still retreating, calling out, "Parade with us, my brave fellows, there is but a handful of the enemy, and we will have them directly."<sup>77</sup>

Indeed Mawhood's position was now most perilous. As Washington led his column over the hill, Hitchcock and Hand swept forward on his right, while the two small parties to the left came out of their cover and pushed bravely up in the face of the fire.<sup>78</sup> Washington exposed himself recklessly. None realized more keenly than he the tremendous issues which hung upon the moment. A defeat at the hands of Mawhood's little force would have meant irretrievable disaster to his army and to the country. At such a time danger to

<sup>75</sup> *Memoirs of the Long Island Historical Society*, Vol. III, p. 295.

<sup>76</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 447.

<sup>77</sup> *Historical Documents*, Princeton Library, *Account of Sergeant R.*, p. 7.

<sup>78</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 447.

his own person was not to be considered. Washington's aide-de-camp, Colonel Fitzgerald, caught sight of the General at this moment leading his men against the foe, directly in the line of fire. As both sides levelled their arms it seemed impossible that he could escape, and Fitzgerald covered his eyes that he might not see him die. A roar of musketry sounded, and then a shout of joy. Washington was unharmed, and waving his hat, was cheering his men on to the attack.<sup>79</sup> (See Map 5.)

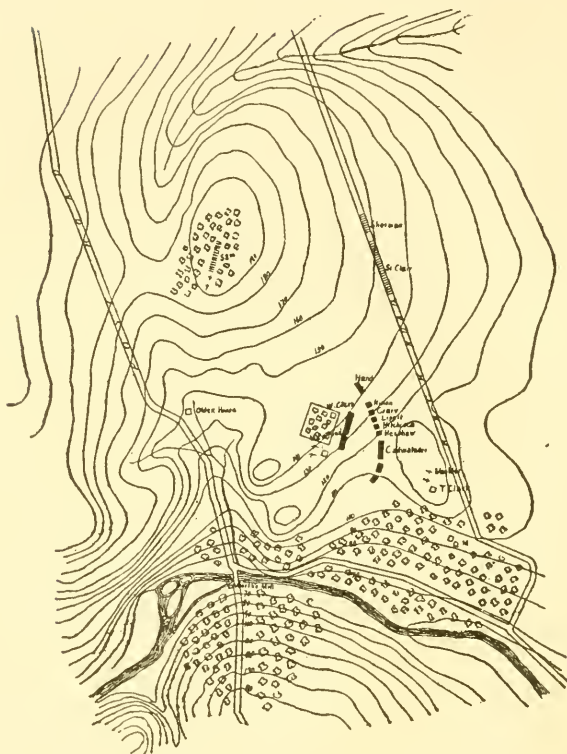
In the meanwhile Hitchcock's brigade was advancing on the enemy's left with the utmost coolness and precision. The right of his line was occupied by the New Hampshire regiment under Lieutenant Colonel Nixon; next from right to left were three Rhode Island regiments under Lieutenant Colonel Crary, Colonel Lippett and Colonel Hitchcock himself; while on the left next to Cadwalader's men was a Massachusetts regiment under Lieutenant Colonel Henshaw.<sup>80</sup> The entire brigade was so worn down by constant fighting that it comprised a bare five or six hundred men, but its spirit was as sturdy as ever, its discipline superb.<sup>81</sup> The gallant Hitchcock, himself dying with tuberculosis, drew them up some 200 yards from the British and they advanced as though on parade. Mawhood, seeing the danger to his left, shifted his line somewhat to the east so as to meet it.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Custis, *Memoirs of Washington*, p. 191.

<sup>80</sup> Stiles, *Literary Diary*, pp. 138-139.

<sup>81</sup> Stiles, *Literary Diary*, p. 139.

<sup>82</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 447.



MAP 5. The American army is shown advancing on Mawhood's command, which has shifted to the left to meet the attack. Hand is on the right, Hitchcock's five regiments in the center and parts of Cadwalader's and Mercer's commands on the left. Sullivan remains stationary on the Back Road and the 55th on Mercer Heights.

Yet Hitchcock did not pause. When his men came within 100 yards of the British they halted for the moment and opened fire. Continuing to advance and to fire alternately, these ragged veterans at last rushed

forward upon the enemy, carrying all before them.<sup>83</sup> At the same time Washington on the left charged with the remnants of Mercer's and Cadwalader's detachments.<sup>84</sup> The British fought desperately and their bravery elicited the praise of Washington himself, but they could not withstand this combined onslaught. Falling back a few paces, they made a determined effort to save their artillery, but the Americans pushed on, took the field pieces and swept their defenders away. Even then, at intervals the British reformed, fired and retreated again.<sup>85</sup> In the end, however, they lost all semblance of discipline, and fled over the countryside in the wildest confusion.

It becomes necessary now to return to the 55th to gain an understanding of the events that followed. At the time when Mawhood advanced to the orchard, those companies of this regiment which did not accompany him, undoubtedly continued their march directly upon Mercer Heights. There they must have been when the fighting began, and there remained throughout the entire battle, until they saw their comrades routed and fleeing in all directions. This is made quite certain by Wilkinson's statement that during the encounter he himself observed the 55th in a small wood which he indicates on his map of the battle field.<sup>86</sup> Despite the crudeness of the etching, by comparing it with other maps in which the topography is correctly

<sup>83</sup> Stiles, *Literary Diary*, p. 139.

<sup>84</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, pp. 440-447.

<sup>85</sup> Stiles, *Literary Diary*, p. 139.

<sup>86</sup> Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 144.

indicated, it becomes evident that this position was on Mercer Heights. Had it been further to the north or east, it would not have fallen within the range of Wilkinson's vision.<sup>87</sup>

There has been some misapprehension as to the reason for the inactivity of the 55th during the action. Even Hall, on other points so well informed, is at a loss for an explanation for its conduct. "Had the 55th regiment acted at the same time, and with equal ardour (as the 17th) whose commanding officer either did not comprehend the order distinctly given, or thought it too dangerous to execute . . . in all probability the enemy would have been foiled, and the day would have been ours."<sup>88</sup>

The commander of the 55th neither misunderstood his orders nor acted with anything but prudence and common sense. He remained immobile on the Heights because he saw drawn up along the back road the veteran regiments of Sullivan's division. Had he marched down to join in the attack on the Americans at any time during the battle, not only would he have released this superior body of troops for Washington's assistance, but he would have exposed his left flank to attack. It was all that could be expected of him to keep inactive a body of troops perhaps three times as numerous as those under his command, among the best in the American army. (See Maps 3, 4 and 5.)

In fact it has been a source of surprise to some writers that Sullivan, with some 600 Continentals,

<sup>87</sup> Wilkinson, Diagrams and Plans, Nos. 3, 4, and 5.

<sup>88</sup> Hall, Civil War in America, pp. 261-262.

stationed within 700 yards of Mawhood's left flank, should have watched the rout of Mercer and Cadwalader without moving to their assistance. But Sullivan could not stir because he had to watch the 55th. Although the troops in the wood on the hill were plainly visible, he probably could not judge of their numbers, and to advance upon the orchard and expose his right to attack would have been most dangerous. In other words, Sullivan and the 55th kept each other out of the battle, each deeming it imprudent to move to the assistance of their comrades, neither daring to attack the other. When it was evident, however, that Mawhood had lost the day beyond recall, the only course left for the 55th was precipitate retreat.

When the British line crumbled before the advance of Washington's men, the fugitives found it impossible to turn to the left in order to rejoin the 55th. Hand's riflemen had interposed between the two detachments, and were already spreading out to the north to cut off any who might flee in that direction. The broken enemy, therefore, were forced either to scatter over the country northwest of the Post Road, or to seek safety by crossing Stony Brook and joining the regiments at Maidenhead.<sup>89</sup>

Of those who took the latter route, some made good their escape. Hall states that Captain Truwin's light horse stationed themselves at the intersection of the two roads, and by heroic efforts held back the pursuers until the fleeing infantry had passed by. Then they

<sup>89</sup> Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 145.



themselves retired, carefully selecting the route not taken by the foot, thus drawing off the Americans upon a false scent.<sup>90</sup>

Large numbers of the British turned up the north bank of Stony Brook in the direction of Pennington. Of these, few seem to have escaped. The victorious Americans, with Hand's riflemen in the lead, pressed hard upon their heels, capturing many and shooting down those who offered resistance. Washington himself, elated at the victory which meant so much for the cause of liberty, urged on the pursuit relentlessly. "What a fine fox chase it is, my boys," he cried out to those near him, as one group after another was overtaken and added to the list of prisoners.<sup>91</sup>

When the rout of Mawhood's men had become irretrievable, the 55th, as we have seen, left its position on Mercer Heights and retreated toward Princeton. Although well aware of the great superiority of Washington's army, its commander decided, in conjunction with the 40th, to make an effort to defend the town and to block the American advance on Brunswick. Between the Heights and the village lay a ravine, known today as Frog Hollow, which has its beginning at Mercer street and runs across the golf links to empty into Stony Brook. Here the British made their stand. Passing through the ravine, the 55th took position on the north slope, probably back of the present artificial lake. The 40th, which had rushed to arms at the first alarm and was advancing to the assistance of the other

<sup>90</sup> Hall, *Civil War in America*, pp. 262-263.

<sup>91</sup> Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 145.



regiments, formed in line to the right, while a heavy platoon was thrown out to the left of the 55th to prevent any flanking movement in that direction.<sup>92</sup>

At the same time Sullivan's division advanced to the attack. Two regiments were sent forward to dislodge the enemy, and succeeded in crossing the ravine and in ascending the opposite side within 60 yards of the British line before they were discovered. Thereupon the enemy, struck with sudden panic, abandoned their position and fled back to the town.<sup>93</sup> Why the two regiments should have made so poor a fight cannot now be definitely ascertained. In numbers they were not greatly inferior to Sullivan's division, they had just been witnesses of what might be accomplished by the superior discipline and equipment of British regulars, they had the advantage of a strong position. Sullivan himself states that the victory was achieved without loss "owing to the manner of attack," but he does not elucidate the matter further.<sup>94</sup> It seems probable that the British, realizing that they were in the presence of the entire American army and that the troops that had routed Mawhood might wheel to the north and east to envelop their right flank and rear, determined to retire while the road was still open.

As they entered the town, Sullivan pressed hard upon their rear. The retreat soon became a precipitate flight. A large number of the British took refuge in Nassau Hall, whose solid stone walls seemed to offer

<sup>92</sup> Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 144.

<sup>93</sup> Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 144.

<sup>94</sup> New Hampshire State Papers, Vol. VI, p. 103.

an opportunity for effective defense.<sup>95</sup> Knocking out the panes of glass, they stationed themselves at every window, and prepared to sell their lives dearly. But the Americans, realizing that it would be a costly operation to attempt to storm the building, brought up the artillery with the intention of battering it to pieces. Moulder's guns were placed before the north door, and a number of shots had been fired before the British awoke to a realization of the futility of further resistance.<sup>96</sup> It is said that the first ball discharged entered the Prayer Hall, and passed through the head of the portrait of George II suspended on the wall.<sup>97</sup>

Fortunately the building itself, which today is so dear to every Princeton graduate, was not seriously damaged. Soon a white flag appeared at one of the windows in token of surrender and the British came out to give themselves up.<sup>98</sup> How bitter was the humiliation of these veterans who now found themselves prisoners in the hands of the despised revolutionists may be judged from the narrative of Sergeant R. who describes them as "a haughty, crabbed set of men."<sup>99</sup>

There is much discrepancy as to how many men were captured in Nassau Hall. Captain Rodney states

<sup>95</sup> Historical Documents, Princeton University Library, Account of Sergeant R., p. 8.

<sup>96</sup> Haven, *Thirty Days in New Jersey*, p. 45.

<sup>97</sup> Hageman, *Princeton and Its Institutions*, Vol. I, p. 139.

<sup>98</sup> Historical Documents, Princeton University Library, Account of Sergeant R., p. 8.

<sup>99</sup> Historical Documents, Princeton University Library, Account of Sergeant R., p. 8.

that 200 here surrendered themselves,<sup>100</sup> and Stryker places the number at 194, "including several wounded dragoons."<sup>101</sup> On the other hand the reliable Cadwalader discounts these estimates and declares that about 60 British, of whom 14 were officers, were taken.<sup>102</sup> Still another account estimates the prisoners as 86.<sup>103</sup> Some American prisoners who had been confined in the college were overjoyed to find themselves at liberty and in the midst of their victorious comrades. With them were released, it is stated, thirty of the "country people that were Accused Either of being Rebels or aiding and Assisting them."<sup>104</sup>

Some of the British in their headlong flight passed down what is now Witherspoon Street and made their way to Rocky Hill.<sup>105</sup> The Americans pressed closely upon their rear, cutting off whole detachments, and adding to the list of prisoners at almost every step. A few made good their escape to Brunswick,<sup>106</sup> but on the whole the 40th and 55th, although their losses in killed and wounded were insignificant, were as completely shattered as the 17th. The splendid Fourth brigade, the very flower of the British army, had practically ceased to exist.

With the break of day on that cold January morn-

<sup>100</sup> *Memoirs of the Long Island Historical Society*, Vol. III, Part II, p. 161.

<sup>101</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 290.

<sup>102</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 448.

<sup>103</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 470.

<sup>104</sup> Olden, *A Brief Narrative*, p. 34.

<sup>105</sup> Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 144.

<sup>106</sup> Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 144.

ing, Cornwallis, to his astonishment and dismay, discovered that the positions on the Assunpinck were empty and that the enemy he had expected to crush so easily had escaped him. Nor had he long to wait before learning whither the Americans had gone, for the sound of cannonading, wafted southward by the breeze, apprised him of the danger which threatened the regiments at Princeton and the stores at Brunswick.<sup>107</sup> "Our Generals, about eight o'clock in the morning," says Captain Hall, "had so far gotten the better of their surprise, that they set the army in motion."<sup>108</sup> Nor did they linger upon the way. General Knox says that they came back to Princeton, "running, puffing, and blowing, and swearing at being so outwitted."<sup>109</sup>

The rear of the army, which had been stationed at Maidenhead during the night of the second, reached Worth's Mill as the Americans were returning from the pursuit of Mawhood's men.<sup>110</sup> Here the enemy were forced to halt, however, for Washington, despite the rapid succession of exciting events, had sent a detachment of troops under General James Potter, to break down the bridge over the creek.<sup>111</sup> The men were still tearing up the planks under the personal supervision of Major John Kelly, when the head of the British column appeared on the hill above. The

<sup>107</sup> Hall, *Civil War in America*, p. 263.

<sup>108</sup> Hall, *Civil War in America*, p. 264.

<sup>109</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 451.

<sup>110</sup> Washington to Congress, Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 461.

<sup>111</sup> Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 148.

enemy at once wheeled their cannon into place and opened so heavy a fire with round shot that the workmen were forced to retire. Major Kelly, however, refused to desist, and continued to hack at the main timbers until he had rendered the structure unsafe for the passage even of infantry. Unfortunately a shot struck one of the planks upon which he was standing and he was precipitated into the swollen stream. He succeeded in reaching the north bank and started to rejoin his men, but his frozen clothes so impeded his progress that he was overtaken and captured by the enemy.<sup>112</sup>

While the work of cutting down the bridge was in progress, Forrest's battery had been posted on the road above to protect the workmen and check the enemy. His guns replied to the fire of the British and for some minutes a lively duel ensued. In the end, however, the red coats passed the stream at a nearby ford, wading waist deep through the water, and advancing up the Post Road, forced the Americans to retire.<sup>113</sup>

At the western edge of Princeton they were again halted by a happy ruse. During their occupation of the village the British had thrown up earthworks, to cover the approach by way of the Post Road, near the present junction of Nassau and Mercer streets. And the Cadwalader map shows that here they had stationed no less than eight 6-pounders. It was natural for them to expect strenuous resistance at this point and they were not surprised, therefore, upon approaching it

<sup>112</sup> Hageman, *Princeton and Its Institutions*, Vol. I, p. 141.

<sup>113</sup> Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 148.

to be met with artillery fire. They waited for reinforcements to come up, sent out parties to reconnoitre to the right and to the left, and not until a full hour had passed did they advance to carry the position by storm. Then they found to their chagrin that Washington's men had long since left the town, and that the fire which had so alarmed them proceeded from one lone gun left behind in the retreat and manned by three or four stragglers.<sup>114</sup>

Before leaving Princeton Washington decided, although with the keenest regret, to forego the attack on Brunswick. His men were worn out with constant marching and fighting, the British were pressing upon his rear, and to have attempted too much would have risked all the fruits of the victories at Trenton and Princeton. Certain detachments of his army had been upon their feet almost without intermission for 48 hours, and were approaching the limit of human endurance. Had they been able to reach Brunswick at all they would have been in no condition to storm the place, or, if they had succeeded in taking it, to defend it from Cornwallis. "The harassed state of our troops," Washington reported to Congress, "many of them having had no rest for two nights and a day, and the danger of losing the advantage we had gained by aiming at too much, induced me, by the advice of my officers, to relinquish the attempt."<sup>115</sup>

But it was the judgment of both Washington and

<sup>114</sup> Hageman, *Princeton and its Institutions*, Vol. I, p. 139.

<sup>115</sup> Ford, *The Writings of George Washington*, Vol. V, pp. 149-150.

the other American generals that had 600 or 1000 fresh troops been available, they could, by a forced march, have taken Brunswick with the vast stores and magazines collected there for the use of the British army, with a military chest containing £70,000.<sup>116</sup> Such a blow, it was thought, would have put an end to the war. In fact Brigadier-General Matthews, who was in command at Brunswick, was in great consternation for fear the place would be taken. Stragglers and fugitives from Princeton began coming in during the morning of the 3d, with confused accounts of the battle. Later on in the day an officer of the 49th, who had been left at Princeton because of illness but had made good his escape, brought the information that the Americans were on the road in full march for Brunswick.<sup>117</sup> General Matthews had with him a small garrison and the 46th regiment which had arrived the day before. With these he marched out to the heights overlooking the town, determined to make as strong a stand as possible against Washington's forces. At the same time he packed the stores on wagons and hurried them along the right bank of the Raritan to the bridge some two miles above the village. Had he succeeded in getting the stores across to the north bank, it was his intention to break down the bridge in the hope that the river would delay the advance of the Americans until he had reached a place of safety.<sup>118</sup>

But Washington led his troops elsewhere. From

<sup>116</sup> Ford, *The Writings of George Washington*, Vol. V, p. 150.

<sup>117</sup> Hall, *Civil War in America*, p. 264.

<sup>118</sup> Hall, *Civil War in America*, p. 265.



Princeton they marched to Kingston, where they destroyed the bridge over the Millstone to impede Cornwallis' advance.<sup>119</sup> Then turning to the left they followed the right bank of the stream in the direction of Morristown. The British came on after them in great haste, through Princeton to Kingston, and having after some delay succeeded in passing the Millstone, set out, not in pursuit of Washington, but directly for Brunswick.<sup>120</sup> They sent a strong detachment of cavalry along the left bank of the Millstone, however, which arrived at Rocky Hill just as the van of the American army was passing on the other side of the stream. Whereupon Captain Rodney, at Washington's order, broke down this bridge also, and the enemy were obliged to retrace their steps.<sup>121</sup>

Washington then continued at his leisure to the village of Millstone, or Somerset Court House, where he arrived at dusk. Had he been an hour sooner he would have captured all the supplies and baggage of the British Fourth brigade.<sup>122</sup> These had been left at Hillsboro, a nearby village, with a guard of 100 men under command of Captain Scott of the 17th, with orders to proceed to Princeton.<sup>123</sup> It so happened, however, that falling in with a party of 400 New Jersey militia, they were surrounded, and word was sent to Captain Scott to surrender. This he refused to do, and form-

<sup>119</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 300.

<sup>120</sup> Hall, *Civil War in America*, p. 266.

<sup>121</sup> *Memoirs of the Long Island Historical Society*, Vol. III, Part II, p. 161.

<sup>122</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 441.

<sup>123</sup> Hall, *Civil War in America*, p. 267.



ing his men in a square behind a barricade of wagons, he forced the militia, who probably were imperfectly armed, to give up the attempt. When the Americans had withdrawn, Scott hastened on to Brunswick, just eluding the van of Washington's army as it approached Millstone. A few fresh troops could easily have overtaken him and secured the rich booty.<sup>124</sup>

But the Americans were now utterly exhausted. Upon reaching the end of their march the men sank down upon the frozen ground and fell asleep without regard to the cold.<sup>125</sup> In fact had Cornwallis known of their proximity and turned to attack them, they could have offered but little resistance. "A spirited effort made against them must have prevailed," says Captain Hall, "and ended in their total dispersion, as they were oppressed in a superior degree through want of rest and excessive fatigue; and, what was still more against them, with little or no provisions."<sup>126</sup> But Cornwallis was intent only upon saving the precious stores, and turned neither to the right nor the left until he had arrived at Brunswick. The next day Washington pushed on to Pluckemin, and on the fifth arrived at Morristown. The most brilliant campaign in the Revolutionary war was over.

The victory at Princeton was crushing in its completeness. The Fourth British brigade was shattered, and only a broken remnant responded to Mawhood's roll call when the detachments reunited at Bruns-

<sup>124</sup> Hall, *Civil War in America*, p. 267; Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 441.

<sup>125</sup> Hageman, *Princeton and Its Institutions*, Vol. I, p. 146.

<sup>126</sup> Hall, *Civil War in America*, p. 267.

wick.<sup>127</sup> The losses, according to General Howe's official report, were 276; 18 killed, 58 wounded and 200 missing. To this list must be added, however, Lieutenant Frederick Desaguliers and nine men of the Royal Artillery, all of whom were killed.<sup>128</sup> And there is good reason to believe that Howe placed his losses well beneath the actual figure. Two days after the battle Washington wrote General Putnam that the number of killed, wounded and prisoners was between 500 and 600.<sup>129</sup> General Knox placed the British killed at 60 and their total loss at 500.<sup>130</sup>

Among the British wounded was Captain William Leslie, son of the Earl of Levin, and one of the most popular officers in the army. Washington discovered him on the field of battle, supported by several English soldiers. He was assigned to the special care of Dr. Benjamin Rush, who had been the recipient of many courtesies from his father while visiting in Edinburgh. The young man's wounds were of a desperate character, however, and he was soon beyond the possibility of all medical assistance. His body was conveyed to Pluckemin, and there, amid the bowed heads of the American officers and the unrestrained tears of his comrades, was buried with full military honors.<sup>131</sup>

Washington's losses at Princeton were very light in point of numbers, all accounts agreeing that no more than 30 were killed. But among them were some of

<sup>127</sup> Hall, *Civil War in America*, p. 263.

<sup>128</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 458.

<sup>129</sup> Ford, *The Writings of George Washington*, Vol. V, p. 151.

<sup>130</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 451.

<sup>131</sup> Custis, *Private Memoirs of Washington*, p. 187.

his best officers, Mercer, Colonel Haslet, Colonel Porter, Major Morris, Captain Shippen, Captain Fleming and Captain Neal.<sup>132</sup> In almost every case these men lost their lives while gallantly attempting, in the face of the enemy's fire, to rally the broken detachments of Mercer and Cadwalader. The death of Mercer alone was a disaster to the American cause, for in bravery, in loyalty, in experience, in military talent he was second to none save Washington himself.

Mercer was found by his aide, Major Armstrong, after the flight of the British, lying desperately wounded in the field of battle, bleeding and insensible.<sup>133</sup> His men lifted him tenderly and carried him to the Thomas Clark house, where he received every care and attention. During the battle Washington was informed that Mercer had been killed, and not until he was on the road to Millstone did he learn that his old friend, while terribly wounded, was yet alive. Whereupon he directed Major Lewis to return with a flag of truce and a letter to Lord Cornwallis, requesting that he be allowed to attend the stricken general. To this the British commander willingly assented, and gave directions that his own staff surgeon should go with him to render medical assistance. But despite the skill of the British doctor and despite the nursing of Miss Sarah Clark and a negro woman belonging to the family, he expired in the arms of Major Lewis nine days after the battle.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>132</sup> Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 146.

<sup>133</sup> Hageman, *Princeton and Its Institutions*, Vol. I, p. 142.

<sup>134</sup> Custis, *Private Memoirs of Washington*, p. 183.

When Washington's men returned from the pursuit of Mawhood's broken detachments, the British from Maidenhead were so close upon their heels that they did not stop to bury the dead upon the field. Nor did Cornwallis, in his headlong march to Brunswick, have time to attend to the lifeless bodies either of friend or foe. A college student who passed over the field on the afternoon of the battle, states that he "had a dismal prospect of a number of pale, mangled corpses," lying unheeded on the ground.<sup>135</sup> The next day, however, thirty-six bodies, 21 British and 15 Americans, were buried north of the William Clark house, near a stone quarry.<sup>136</sup> In honor to friend and foe alike, a monument was erected in 1917 on a nearby knoll, bearing the inscription:

NEAR HERE LIE BURIED  
THE AMERICAN AND BRITISH OFFICERS  
AND SOLDIERS  
WHO FELL AT THE BATTLE OF PRINCETON  
JANUARY 3D, 1777

with the following lines written by ALFRED NOYES,  
Visiting Professor in Princeton University:

Here freedom stood, by slaughtered friend and foe,  
And, ere the wrath paled or that sunset died,  
Looked through the ages; then, with eyes aglow  
Laid them to wait that future side by side."

Other bodies were taken to Princeton for interment, and still others were buried in various places by the country people.

<sup>135</sup> Hageman, *Princeton and Its Institutions*, Vol. I, p. 142; *Princeton Standard*, May 15, 1863.

<sup>136</sup> Olden, *A Brief Narrative*, p. 33.

Because of the unfortunate escape of Captain Scott at Hillsboro, with the baggage of the Fourth brigade, the stores and munitions taken by the Americans at the battle of Princeton were not large. Washington reported to Congress that some blankets, shoes and a few other trifling articles had fallen into his hands, and that he had burned the hay "and such other things as the shortness of the time would allow."<sup>137</sup> It is probable, however, that the General purposely minimized the matter, for his needs were always pressing and he did not wish Congress to imagine that the booty could in any way justify a slackening of their efforts to supply him properly.

Certainly the small arms taken from the captured British must have been invaluable to the Americans, who had not yet received the French muskets which Silas Deane was endeavoring to send, and so, in many cases were equipped only with hunting rifles. Apparently also the enemy's field pieces fell into Washington's hands, but how many there were it is impossible to say. Mawhood took with him on his march to Maidenhead four cannon, and undoubtedly two and perhaps more were left with the 40th for the defense of Princeton.<sup>138</sup> One account states that the Americans took five guns,<sup>139</sup> another "three pieces of artillery,"<sup>140</sup> whereas Washington himself mentions only two.<sup>141</sup> These fine pieces would have been of great

<sup>137</sup> Ford, *The Writings of George Washington*, Vol. V, p. 149.

<sup>138</sup> Hall, *Civil War in America*, p. 259.

<sup>139</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 470.

<sup>140</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 448.

<sup>141</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 461.

value to the army had it been possible to remove them, but the lack of horses made it necessary to spike and leave them. One, it is stated, was thrown down a well. Major Potter, however, made a clever exchange, leaving his own iron 3-pounder and taking away in return a brass 6-pounder.<sup>142</sup>

The results of the campaign of Trenton and Princeton were of far-reaching import. With his ragged and ill-equipped army, Washington had snatched the offensive from the British, for the moment at least he had made Pennsylvania secure from invasion, and had regained all New Jersey save the small district between New York and the Raritan. Howe and Cornwallis had been completely outgeneraled, outwitted, outfought. The swift and unexpected blows of the Americans had cost them some 1600 men, with large quantities of arms and ammunition. But they lost also, and this was even more important, the tradition of invincibility. At Trenton the dread and even awe of the Americans for the terrible Hessians changed into something akin to contempt; at Princeton it was shown that British regulars could be routed, shattered and captured in large numbers. In this respect Princeton may be called the Sphacteria of the Revolution.

From Massachusetts to Georgia the news revived the hopes of the people, inspired them to confidence in the future, with determination not to submit to the British Government. Immediately the New Jersey militia began to come in, eager to serve under the great commander who had saved their State from the in-

<sup>142</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 448.

human enemy. Washington soon found at his disposal a new army of over eight thousand men, fairly well disciplined and far better equipped than ever before. In short, the fourteen days from Christmas 1776 to January 7, 1777, had wrought a startling reversal in the fortunes of the Revolution, had convinced the world and the despairing patriots themselves that victory might yet be won.

THOMAS JEFFERSON WERTENBAKER





## APPENDIX



## APPENDIX

### REPORT OF CRAWFORD C. MADEIRA, FIRST SERGEANT AND SECRETARY OF THE FIRST TROOP PHILADELPHIA CITY CAVALRY

June 9, 1922.

Weather—Clear and Hot.

Pursuant to G.O. 5 C.S. 1922, the Troop assembled at the Armory this date at 8:30 A.M. Full dress mounted order, dismounted to proceed to Princeton, N. J. to act as escort to the President of the U.S., Hon. Warren G. Harding, on the occasion of the dedication of the monument commemorating the Battle of Princeton.

After the inspection by the C.O. the Troop proceeded to Princeton, New Jersey, by automobiles, which were donated to the Troop for this purpose, by various members.

On arrival at the Artillery stables, Princeton, the Troopers left the motors and selected horses, very kindly offered to the Troop by the Artillery R.O.T.C. Unit of Princeton University.

At 11:45 A.M. the Troop assembled mounted, and were divided into three platoons. There were present: Capt. Wood, Lts. Frazier and Morris, 1st Sgt. Madeira, Sgts. Biddle, Wagner, Page, Sharpless, T; Corporals Newkirk, Thornton, Sharpless, C; Privates Barrows, Blye, Carter, Chambers, Clay, Colhoun, Davison, DuBarry, Downs, R; Ferguson, Fisher, Fleming, Frazier, G; Godfrey, Groome, Hagerty, Hardwick, Harris, Hickman, Huhn, Hutchinson, Ingersoll, Jones, Kellett, King, Lee, F; Madeira, E; Platt, Rebmann, Roach, Robb, Rush, Smith, C; Smith, E; Stroud, Tatnall, Taylor, C; Thompson, C; Thompson, R; Townsend, R. L; Wagner, J; Walton, Wheeler, F; Wheeler, S; Wood and Trumpeter Singer. Also Hon. Cornets Sewell, Treas. and Wagner, Q. M., and Hon. Dougherty T. and Churchman.

The following were detailed as outriders, under command of Lt. Frazier,—Dougherty, T; Stroud, Fisher, Wagner, J.

The Troop left the stables at 12 noon, and proceeded in column North on Washington Road to Nassau St., West to Bayard Lane, then North to the Outskirts of Princeton, where the New Jersey and Pennsylvania Traction Company tracks cross Bayard Lane. Here the Troop drew up in line to await orders.

On the arrival of the President, the Troop presented sabre, while the Princeton R.O.T.C. Battery thundered its 21 gun salute. The Troop then broke into column and escorted the President South on Bayard Lane, at a trot, to Nassau and Stockton Streets, then to "Morven," the residence of Mr. Bayard Stockton, President of the Princeton Battle Monument Commission, on Stockton Street. Sabres were presented as the President was greeted by Mr. Stockton.

After a brief pause, the President again got into the motor, the Troop presented sabre, and, in column, escorted the President East along Stockton Street to the Battle Monument, at the intersection of Bayard Lane, Stockton and Nassau Streets. Here the Troop drew up in line. Sabres were again presented as the President left his escort to make the dedication address at the monument. The C.O. dismounted and accompanied the President.

During the dedication address, the President made the following remarks:

"If I had found no other compensation in a trip to Princeton it would have been in two things new to my experience. One was the presentation of the colors, beautifully done, where I saw for the first time the combination of the colors that represented the hopes and aspirations and determinations of the early American patriots who gave us our independence and union, and then saw these colors blended into one supreme banner of Americanism—our dear Old Glory.

"The other compensation, my countrymen, was in seeing the Philadelphia Troop and the Infantrymen of the

5th Maryland. It is not so much in the men themselves and the wonderful appearance they made today, but the compensation is in the thought that these organizations have been in continuous service since the days of the American Revolution. They stand today and typify those who gave us independence and freedom. I think it is well, my countrymen, and I like this monument. I like every memorial to American patriotism and American sacrifices. No land can do too much to cherish with all its heart and soul these great inheritances.

"Somehow there comes to my mind the assurance that in the preservation of these organizations of the Philadelphia Troop and the 5th Maryland Infantrymen there is a tie running back to the immortal beginning of this American Republic, and we of today and the veterans of the World War, the sons and daughters of the men who go on, will keep these supreme inheritances and carry them on to the fulfillment of a great American destiny."

While the Dedication was taking place, the Troop, at ease, remained in line on Stockton Street. At the close of the exercises, Lt. Frazier led the Troop in column along Stockton Street to Mercer Street, where the Troop dismounted, and marched to the Nassau Club, for lunch, as guests of His Honor, the Mayor of Princeton.

The C.O. accompanied the President to "Morven," where luncheon was served for the Presidential Party.

After a very pleasant luncheon and refreshments at the Nassau Club, the Troop mounted up at 2:30 P.M., returned to "Morven," and formed line to await the pleasure of the President.

At 2:45 P.M. the President appeared, the Troop presented sabre, formed column and escorted him East on Stockton and Nassau Streets to Nassau Hall of Princeton University. Here line was formed and sabres presented, as the President got from his automobile to join the procession of the Officers and Faculty of Princeton University, preparatory to the conferring of degrees. The C.O. having dismounted, accompanied the President in this procession.

At the conclusion of the conferring an Honorary De-

gree upon the President, the Troop again received the President by presenting sabre, and, at a trot, escorted him East on Nassau Street and then South through the University Grounds to President Hibben's residence. Here the escort duty ceased, and the Troops returned to the artillery stables and dismounted.

The Troop then fell in, dismounted, in column of 2's and proceeded to the reception at President Hibben's residence, where they were presented to President and Mrs. Harding. After this ceremony, the Troop was dismissed at 5.30 P. M., and individually returned to Philadelphia.

It seems fitting to note here that the roads traversed during this tour of duty were the same as those over which the Troop fought on January 3, 1777, and that one of the Officers, on this occasion, was the direct descendant of the then C.O of the Troop.

The Ivy Club of Princeton University thoughtfully extended to individual members of the Troop their cordial hospitality, both before the assembly in the morning, and after the Troop was dismissed in the afternoon.

CRAWFORD C. MADEIRA,  
First Sergeant and Secretary.

REPORT OF COLONEL WASHINGTON BOWIE, JR. OF THE  
MARYLAND NATIONAL GUARD, FIFTH INFANTRY,  
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

A detachment of the 5th Maryland Infantry, consisting of the Commanding Officer and his staff, the colors, and a provisional company of sixty-five men, left Baltimore at 8.15 A.M. on a special car via Pennsylvania Railroad, and arrived at Princeton at 11.45 A.M. The detachment detrained and marched through Princeton to the Monument where it formed on the right as a guard of honor for the President of the United States. Upon the approach of the President ruffles were sounded by the fifes and drums of the detachment. Upon completion of the ceremonies, the Commanding Officer attended luncheon with the President and his party, while the balance of the detachment were entertained at luncheon by the Nassau Club. After luncheon the detachment was again formed and acted as a special escort for the President when he proceeded to Nassau Hall and received his degree. After the ceremony was over the detachment visited the college buildings and places of interest in Princeton and left at 6:45 P.M. arriving in Baltimore at 10:30 P.M. A buffet supper was served on the car while enroute to Baltimore.

The detachment wore the historic gray uniform with white trousers, which has been the uniform of the regiment since Revolutionary times.

The following officers were present with the detachment: Colonel Washington Bowie, Jr., Lt. Colonel Frank A. Hancock, Major James G. Knight, Major Walter E. Black, Major Edward McK. Johnson, Major Herbert M. Foster, Major S. Johnson Poe, Captain John F. Houck, Captain Bethel A. Simmons, Captain Leroy S. Nichalson, First Lieutenant J. H. Rosenberger, First Lieutenant George M. Miller, First Lieutenant John Kellner, First Lieutenant Arthur Cunningham, First Lieutenant James M. Adams.

WASHINGTON BOWIE, JR.,  
Colonel Fifth Infantry MNG.







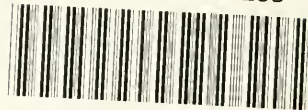








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